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April 12, 1881.

No. 74. VOL. III. PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS, 98 WILLIAM ST., N. Y. PRICE, 5 CENTS.



"CREEPING UP BEHIND HER LOVER, CECIL GAZED OVER HIS SHOULDER AT THE LETTER HE WAS READING."

Cecil Castlemaine's Gage; OR, THE Story of a Broidered Shield.

BY OUIDA.

CHAPTER I.

CECIL CASTLEMAINE was the beauty of her county and her line, the handsomest of all the handsome women that had graced her race, when she moved a century and a half ago down the stately staircase, and through the gilded and tapestried halls of Lilliesford. The town had run mad after her, and her face leveled politics, and was cited as admiringly by the Whigs of St. James as by the Tories at the Cocoa-tree, by the beaux and Mohocks at Garraway's as by the alumni at the Grecian, by the wits at Will's as by the fops at Ozinda's.

Wherever she went, whether to the Haymarket or the Opera, to the

'Change for a fan or the palace for a State ball, to Drury Lane to see Pastoral Phillips' dreary dilution of Racine, or to some fair chief of her faction for basset and ombre, she was surrounded by the best men of her time, and hated by Whig beauties with virulent wrath, for she was a Tory to the backbone, indeed a Jacobite at heart; worshiped Bolingbroke, detested Marlborough and Eugene, believed in all the horrors of the programme said to have been plotted by the Whigs for the anniversary show of 1711, and was thought to have prompted the satire on those fair politicians who are disguised as *Rosalinda* and *Nigranilla* in the eighty-first paper of the *Spectator*.

Cecil Castlemaine was the greatest beauty of her day, lovelier still at four-and-twenty than she had been at seventeen, unwedded, though the highest coronets in the land had been offered to her; far above the coquetteries and minauderies of her friends, far above imitation of the affectations of "Lady Betty Modley's skuttle," or need of practicing

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It was the June of the year '15, and the coming disaffection was seething and boiling secretly among the Tories; the impeachment of Ormond and Bolingbroke had strengthened the distaste to the new-come Hanoverian pack, their attainder had been the blast of air needed to excite the smoldering wood to flame, the gentlemen of that party in the South began to grow impatient of the intrusion of the distant German branch, to think lovingly of the old legitimate line, and to feel something of the chafing irritation of the gentlemen of the North, who were fretting like stag-hounds held in leash.

Envoys passed to and fro between St. Germain, and Jacobite nobles, priests of the church who had fallen out of favor and were typified as the Scarlet Woman by a rival who, though successful, was still bitter, plotted with ecclesiastical relish in the task; letters were conveyed in rolls of innocent lace, plans were forwarded in frosted confections, messages were passed in invisible cipher that defied investigation. The times were dangerous; full of plot and counterplot, of risk and danger, of fomenting projects and hidden disaffection—times in which men, living habitually over mines, learned to like the uncertainty, and to think life flavorless without the chance of losing it any hour; and things being in this state, the Earl of Castlemaine deemed it prudent to take the counsel of his friend in power, and retire from London for a while, perhaps for the safety of his own person, perhaps for the advancement of his cause, either of

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It was the June of the year '15, and the coming disaffection was seething and boiling secretly among the Tories; the impeachment of Ormond and Bolingbroke had strengthened the distaste to the new-come Hanoverian pack, their attainder had been the blast of air needed to excite the smoldering wood to flame, the gentlemen of that party in the South began to grow impatient of the intrusion of the distant German branch, to think lovingly of the old legitimate line, and to feel something of the chafing irritation of the gentlemen of the North, who were fretting like stag-hounds held in leash.

Envoys passed to and fro between St. Germain, and Jacobite nobles, priests of the church who had fallen out of favor and were typified as the Scarlet Woman by a rival who, though successful, was still bitter, plotted with ecclesiastical relish in the task; letters were conveyed in rolls of innocent lace, plans were forwarded in frosted confections, messages were passed in invisible cipher that defied investigation. The times were dangerous; full of plot and counterplot, of risk and danger, of fomenting projects and hidden disaffection—times in which men, living habitually over mines, learned to like the uncertainty, and to think life flavorless without the chance of losing it any hour; and things being in this state, the Earl of Castlemaine deemed it prudent to take the counsel of his friend in power, and retire from London for a while, perhaps for the safety of his own person, perhaps for the advancement of his cause, either of

the Fan exercise; haughty, peerless, radiant, unwon—nay, more—untouched; for the finest gentleman on the town could not flatter himself that he had ever stirred the slightest trace of interest in her, nor boast, as he stood in the inner circle at the Chocolate-house (unless, indeed, he lied more impudently than Tom Wharton himself), that he had ever been honored by a glance of encouragement from the Earl's daughter. She was too proud to cheapen herself with coquetry, too fastidious to care for her conquests over those who whispered to her through Nicolini's song, vied to have the privilege of carrying her fan, drove past her windows in Soho Square, crowded about her in St. James's Park, paid court even to her little spaniel Indamara, and to catch but a glimpse of her brocaded train as it swept a ball-room floor, would leave even their play at the Groom Porter's, Mrs. Oldfield in the green room, a night hunt with Mohun and their brother Mohocks, a circle of wits gathered "within the steam of the coffee-pot" at Will's, a dinner at Halifax's, a supper at Bolingbroke's—whatever, according to their several tastes, made their best entertainment and was hardest to quit.

The highest suitors of the day sought her smile and sued for her hand; men left the Court and the Mall to join the Flanders army before the lines at Bouchain less for loyal love of England than hopeless love of Cecil Castlemaine. Her father vainly urged her not to fling away offers that all the women at St. James's envied her. She was untouched and unwon, and when her friends, the court beauties, the fine ladies, the coquettes of quality, rallied her on her coldness (envying her her conquests), she would smile her slight proud smile and bow her stately head. "Perhaps she was cold; she might be; they were personable men? Oh yes! she had nothing to say against them. His Grace of Belamour?—a pretty wit, without doubt. Lord Millamont?—Diverting, but a coxcomb. He had beautiful hands; it was a pity he was always thinking of them! Sir Gage Rivers?—As obsequious a lover as the man in the 'Way of the World,' but she had heard he was very boastful and facetious at women over his chocolate at Ozinda's. The Earl of Argent? A gallant soldier, surely, but whatever he might protest, no mistress would ever rival with him the dice at the Groom Porter's. Lord Philip Bellairs? A proper gentleman; no fault in him; a bel esprit and an elegant courtier; pleased many, no doubt, but he did not please her overmuch. Perhaps her taste was too fanical, or her character too cold, as they said. She preferred it should be so. When you were content it were folly to seek a change. For her part, she failed to comprehend how women could stoop to flutter their fans and choose their ribbons, and rack their tirewoman's brains for new pulvillios, and lappets, and devices, and practice their curtsy and recovery before their pier-glass, for no better aim or stake than to draw the glance and win the praise of men for whom they cared nothing. A woman who had the eloquence of beauty and a true pride should be above heed for such affectations, pleasure in such applause!"

So she would put them all aside and turn the tables on her friends, and go on her own way, proud, peerless Cecil Castlemaine, conquering and unconquered; and Steele must have had her name in his thoughts, and honored it heartily and sincerely, when he wrote one Tuesday, on the 21st of October, under the domino of his Church Coquette, "I say I do honor to those who *can be coquettes and are not such*, but I despise all who would be so, and, in despair of arriving at it themselves, hate and vilify all those who can." A definition justly drawn by his keen, quick graver, though doubtless it only excited the ire of, and was entirely lost upon, those who read the paper over their dish of bohea, or over their toilette, while they shifted a patch for an hour before they could determine it, or regretted the loss of ten guineas at crimp.

Cecil Castlemaine was the beauty of the Town: when she sat at Drury Lane on the Tory side of the house, the devoutest admirer of Oldfield or Mrs. Porter scarcely heard a word of the Heroic Daughter, or the Amorous Widow, and

the "beau fullest of his own dear self" forgot his silver-fringed gloves, his medallion snuff box, his knotted cravat, his clouded cane, the slaughter that he planned to do from gazing at her where she sat as though she were reigning sovereign at St. James's, the Castlemaine diamonds flashing crescent-like above her brow. At church and court, at park and assembly, there were none who could eclipse that haughty gentlewoman; therefore her fond women friends who had caressed her so warmly and so gracefully, and pulled her to pieces behind her back, if they could, so eagerly over their dainty cups of tea in an afternoon visit, were glad, one and all, when on "Barnabybright," Anglice, the 22d (then the 11th) of June, the great Castlemaine chariot, with its three herons blazoned on its coroneted panels, its laced liveries and gilded harness, rolled over the heavy, ill-made roads down into the country in almost princely pomp, the peasants pouring out from the wayside cottages to stare at my lord's coach.

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She had regretted leaving the Town, moreover; a leader of the mode, a wit, a woman of the world, she missed her accustomed sphere; she was no pastoral Phyllis, no country-born Mistress Fiddy, to pass her time in provincial pleasures, in making cordial waters, in tending her beau-pots, in preserving her fallen rose-leaves, in inspecting the confections

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The new-comer was a tall and handsome man, of noble presence, bronzed by foreign suns, pale and jaded just now with hard riding, while his dark silver-laced suit was splashed and covered with dust; but as he bowed low to her, critical Cecil Castlemaine saw that not Belamour himself could have better grace, not my Lord Millamont courtlier mien or whiter hands, and listened with gracious air to what her father unfolded to her of his mission from St. Germain, whither he had come, at great personal risk, in many disguises, and at breathless speed, to place in their hands a precious letter in cypher from James Stuart to his well-beloved and loyal subject Herbert George, Earl of Castlemaine. A letter spoken of with closed doors and in low whispers, loyal as was the household, supreme as the Earl ruled over his domains of Lilliesford, for these were times when men mistrusted those of their own blood, and when the very figures on the tapestry seemed instinct with life to spy and betray—when they almost feared the silk that tied a missive should babble of its contents, and the hound that slept beside them should read and tell their thoughts.

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So she stood on the terrace the first morning of her exile, her thoughts far away, with the loyal gentlemen of the North, and the banished court at St. Germain, the lids drooping proudly over her haughty eyes, and her lips half parted with a faint smile of triumph in the visions limned by ambition and imagination, while the wind softly stirred the rich lace of her bodice, and her fingers lay lightly, yet firmly, on the head of her stag-hound. She looked up at last as she heard the ring of a horse's hoofs, and saw a sorrel, covered with dust and foam, spurred up the avenue, which, rounding past the terrace, swept on to the front entrance; the sorrel looked well-nigh spent, and his rider somewhat worn and languid, as a man might do with justice who had been in boot and saddle twenty-four hours at the stretch, scarce stopping for a stoup of wine; but he lifted his hat, and bowed down to his saddle-bow as he passed her.

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The new-comer was a tall and handsome man, of noble presence, bronzed by foreign suns, pale and jaded just now with hard riding, while his dark silver-laced suit was splashed and covered with dust; but as he bowed low to her, critical Cecil Castlemaine saw that not Belamour himself could have better grace, not my Lord Millamont courtlier mien or whiter hands, and listened with gracious air to what her father unfolded to her of his mission from St. Germain, whither he had come, at great personal risk, in many disguises, and at breathless speed, to place in their hands a precious letter in cypher from James Stuart to his well-beloved and loyal subject Herbert George, Earl of Castlemaine. A letter spoken of with closed doors and in low whispers, loyal as was the household, supreme as the Earl ruled over his domains of Lilliesford, for these were times when men mistrusted those of their own blood, and when the very figures on the tapestry seemed instinct with life to spy and betray—when they almost feared the silk that tied a missive should babble of its contents, and the hound that slept beside them should read and tell their thoughts.

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Perchance the beauty, whose eyes he had seen lighten and proud brow flush as she read the royal greeting and

which were easier insured at his seat in the western counties than amidst the Whigs of the capital.

The castle of Lilliesford was bowered in the thick woods of the western counties, a giant pile built by Norman masons. Troops of deer herded under the gold-green beechen boughs, the sunlight glistened through the aisles of the trees, and quivered down on to the thick moss, and ferns, and tangled grass that grew under the park woodlands; the water-lilies clustered on the river, and the swans "floated double, swan and shadow," under the leaves that swept into the water; then, when Cecil Castlemaine came down to share her father's retirement, as now, when her name and titles on the gold plate of a coffin that lies with others of her race in the mausoleum across the park, where winter snows and summer sun-rays are alike to those who sleep within, is all that tells at Lilliesford of the loveliest woman of her time who once reigned there as mistress.

The country was in its glad green midsummer beauty, and the musk-rosebuds bloomed in profuse luxuriance over the chill marble of the terraces, and scattered their delicate odorous petals in fragrant showers on the sward of the lawns, when Cecil Castlemaine came down to what she termed her exile. The morning was fair and cloudless, its sunbeams piercing through the darkest glades in the woodlands, the thickest shroud of the ivy, the deepest-hued pane of the mullioned windows, as she passed down the great staircase where lords and gentlewomen of her race gazed on her from the canvas of Lely and Jamesone, Bourdain and Vandyke, crossed the hall with her dainty step, so stately yet so light, and standing by the window of her own bower-room, was lured out on to the terrace overlooking the west side of the park.

She made such a picture as Vandyke would have liked to paint, with her golden glow upon her, and the musk-roses clustering about her round the pilasters of marble—the white, chill marble to which Belamour and many other of her lovers of the court and town had often likened her. Vandyke would have lingered lovingly on the hand that rested on her stag-hound's head, would have caught her air of court-like grace and dignity, would have painted with delighted fidelity her deep azure eyes, her proud brow, her delicate lips arched haughtily like a cupid's bow, would have picked out every fold of her sweeping train, every play of light on her silken skirts, every dainty tracery of her point-lace. Yet even painted by Sir Anthony, that perfect master of art and elegance, though more finished, it could have hardly been more faithful, more instinct with grace, and life, and dignity, than a sketch drawn of her shortly after that time by one who loved her well, which is still hanging in the gallery at Lilliesford, lighted up by the afternoon sun when it streams in through the western windows.

Cecil Castlemaine stood on the terrace looking over the lawns and gardens through the opening vistas of meeting boughs and interlaced leaves to the woods and hills beyond, fused in a soft mist of green and purple with her hand lying carelessly on her hound's broad head. She was a zealous Tory, a skilled politician, and her thoughts were busy with the hopes and fears, the chances for and against, of a cause that lay near her heart, but whose plans were yet immature, whose first blow was yet unstruck, and whose well-wishers were sanguine of a success they had not yet hazarded, though they hardly ventured to whisper to each other their previous designs and desires. Her thoughts were far away, and she hardly heeded the beauty round her, musing on schemes and projects dear to her party, that would imperil the Castlemaine coronet, but would serve the only royal house the Castlemaine line had ever in their hearts acknowledged.

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So the presence of the Chevalier's messenger was not altogether unwelcome and distasteful to her. She saw him but little, merely conversing at table with him with that distant and dignified courtesy which marked her out from the light, free, inconsequent manners in vogue with other women of quality of her time; the air which had chilled half the softest things even on Belamour's lips, and kept the vainest coxcomb hesitating and abashed.

But by degrees she observed that the Envoy was a man who had lived in many countries and in many courts, was well versed in the tongues of France and Italy and Spain—in their belles-lettres, too, moreover—and had served his apprenticeship to good company in the salons at Versailles, in the audience-room of the Vatican, at the receptions of the Duchess du Maine, and with the banished family at St. Germain. He spoke with a high and sanguine spirit of the troublous times approaching and the beloved Cause whose crisis was at hand, which chimed in with her humor better than the flippancies of Belamour, the airy nothings of Millamont. He was but a soldier of fortune, a poor gentleman who, named to her in the town, would have had never a word, and would have been unnoted amidst the crowding beaux who clustered round to hold her fan and hear how she had been pleased with the drolleries of *Grief à la Mode*. But down in the western counties she deigned to listen to the Prince's officer, to smile—a smile beautiful when it came on her proud lips, as the play of light on the opals of her jeweled stomacher—nay, even to be amused when he spoke of the women of foreign courts, to be interested when he told which was but reluctantly, of his own perils, escapes, and adventures, to discourse with him, riding home under the beech avenues from hawking, or standing on the western terrace at curfew to watch the sunset, of many things on

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On the whole, through these long midsummer days, Lady Cecil found the Envoy from St. Germain a companion that did not suit her ill, sought less the solitude of her bower-room, and listened graciously to him in the long twilight hours, while the evening dew gathered in the cups of the musk-roses, and the star-rays began to quiver on the water-lilies floating on the river below, that murmured along, with endless song, under the beechen-boughs. A certain softness stole over her, relaxing the cold hauteur of which Belamour had so often complained, giving a nameless charm, supplying a nameless something, lacking before, in the beauty of The Castlemaine.

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So the summer-time passed, and the autumn came, the corn-lands brown with harvest, the hazel-copses strewn with fallen nuts, the beech-leaves turning into reddened gold. As the wheat ripened but to meet the sickle, as the nuts grew but to fall, as the leaves turned to gold but to wither, so the sanguine hopes, the fond ambitions of men, strengthened and matured only to fade into disappointment and destruction! Four months had sped by since the Prince's messenger had come to Lilliesford—months that had gone swiftly with him as some sweet delicious dream; and the time had come when he had orders to ride north, secretly and swiftly, speak with Mr. Forster and other gentlemen concerned in the meditated rising, and convey despatches and instructions to the Earl of Mar; for Prince James was projecting soon to join his loyal adherents in Scotland, and the critical moment was close at hand, the moment when, to Fulke Ravensworth's high and sanguine courage, victory seemed certain; failure, if no treachery marred, no dissension weakened, impossible; the moment to which he looked for honor, success, distinction, that should give him claim and title to aspire—where? Strong man, cool soldier though he was, he shrank from drawing his fancied future out from the golden haze of immature hope, lest he should see it wither upon

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Fulke Ravensworth never flattered her, moreover, and flattery was a honeyed confection of which she had long been cloyed; he even praised boldly before her other women of beauty and grace whom he had seen at Versailles, at Sceaux, and at St. Germain; neither did he defer to her perpetually, but where he differed would combat her sentiments courteously but firmly. Though a soldier and a man of action, he had an admirable skill at the limner's art; could read to her the Divina Commedia, or the comedies of Lope da' Vega, and transfer crabbed Latin and abstruse Greek into elegant English for her pleasures, and though a beggared gentleman of most precarious fortunes, he would speak of life and its chances, of the Cause and its perils, with a daring which she found preferable to the lisped languor of the men of the town, who had no better campaigns than laying siege to a prude, cared for no other weapons than their toilettes and snuff-boxes, and sought no other excitement than a *coup d' eclat* with the lion-tumblers.

On the whole, through these long midsummer days, Lady Cecil found the Envoy from St. Germain a companion that did not suit her ill, sought less the solitude of her bower-room, and listened graciously to him in the long twilight hours, while the evening dew gathered in the cups of the musk-roses, and the star-rays began to quiver on the water-lilies floating on the river below, that murmured along, with endless song, under the beechen-boughs. A certain softness stole over her, relaxing the cold hauteur of which Belamour had so often complained, giving a nameless charm, supplying a nameless something, lacking before, in the beauty of The Castlemaine.

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So the summer-time passed, and the autumn came, the corn-lands brown with harvest, the hazel-copses strewn with fallen nuts, the beech-leaves turning into reddened gold. As the wheat ripened but to meet the sickle, as the nuts grew but to fall, as the leaves turned to gold but to wither, so the sanguine hopes, the fond ambitions of men, strengthened and matured only to fade into disappointment and destruction! Four months had sped by since the Prince's messenger had come to Lilliesford—months that had gone swiftly with him as some sweet delicious dream; and the time had come when he had orders to ride north, secretly and swiftly, speak with Mr. Forster and other gentlemen concerned in the meditated rising, and convey despatches and instructions to the Earl of Mar; for Prince James was projecting soon to join his loyal adherents in Scotland, and the critical moment was close at hand, the moment when, to Fulke Ravensworth's high and sanguine courage, victory seemed certain; failure, if no treachery marred, no dissension weakened, impossible; the moment to which he looked for honor, success, distinction, that should give him claim and title to aspire—where? Strong man, cool soldier though he was, he shrank from drawing his fancied future out from the golden haze of immature hope, lest he should see it wither upon

injunction, made a sojourn near her presence not distasteful; perchance he cared little where he stayed till the drawing time of action and of rising should arrive, when he should take the field and fight till life or death for the "White Rose and the long heads of hair." He was a soldier of fortune, a poor gentleman with no patrimony but his name, no chance of distinction save by his sword; sworn to a cause whose star was set forever; for many years his life had been of changing adventure and shifting chances, now fighting with Berwick at Almanza, now risking his life in some delicate and dangerous errand for James Stuart that could not have been trusted so well to any other officer about St. Germain; gallant to rashness, yet with much of the acumen of the diplomatist, he was invaluable to his Court and Cause, but, Stuart-like, men-like, they hastened to employ, but ever forgot to reward!

Lady Cecil missed her town-life, and did not over-favor her exile in the western counties. To note down on her Mother's tablets the drowsy homilies droned out by the chaplain on a Sabbath noon, to play at crambo, to talk with her tirewomen of new washes for the skin, to pass her hours away in knotting?—she, whom Steele might have writ of when he drew his character of *Eudoxia*, could wile her exile with none of these insanities; neither could she consort with gentry who seemed to her a little better than the boors of a country wake, who had never heard of Mr. Spectator and knew nothing of Mr. Cowley, countrywomen whose ambition was in their cowslip wines, fox-hunters more ignorant and uncouth than the dumb brutes they followed.

Who was there for miles around with whom she could stoop to associate, with whom she cared to exchange a word? Madam from the vicarage, in her grogram, learned in syrups, slaves, and possets? Country Lady Bountifuls, with gossip of the village and the poultry-yard? Provincial Peeresses, who had never been to London since Queen Anne's coronation? A squirearchy, who knew of no music save the concert of the stop-hounds, no court save the court of the county assize, no literature unless by miracle 't were Tarleton's Jests? None such as these could cross the inlaid oak parquet of Lilliesford, and be ushered into the presence of Cecil Castlemaine.

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Her hound, asleep beside her, raised his head with a low growl as a step intruded on the sanctity of the bower-room, then composed himself again to slumber, satisfied it was no foe. His mistress turned slowly; she knew the horses waited; she had shunned this ceremony of farewell, and never thought any would be bold enough to venture here without permission sought and gained.

"Lady Cecil, I could not go upon my way without one word of parting. Pardon me if I have been too rash to seek it here."

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She pressed her hand closer on the opals—the jewels of calamity—and smiled:

"Assuredly I wish you God speed, Sir Fulke, and safe issue from all perils."

He bowed low; then raised himself to his fullest height, and stood beside her, watching the light play upon the opals:

"That is all you vouchsafe me?"

"All? It is as much as you would claim, sir, is it not? It is more than I would say to many."

"Your pardon—it is more than I should claim if prudence were ever by, if reason always ruled! I have no right to ask for, seek for, even wish for, more; such petitions may only be addressed by men of wealth and of high title; a landless soldier should have no pride to sting, no heart to wound; they are the prerogative of a happier fortune."

Her lips turned white, but she answered haughtily; the crimson light flashing in her jewels, heirlooms priceless and hereditary, like her beauty and her pride:

"This is strange language, sir! I fail to apprehend you."

"You have never thought that I ran a danger deadlier than that which I have ever risked on any field? You have never guessed that I have had the madness, the presumption, the crime—it may be in your eyes—to love you."

The color flushed to her face, crimsoning even her brow, and then fled back. Her first instinct was insulted pride—a beggared gentleman, a landless soldier, spoke to her of love!—of love!—which Belamour had barely had courage to whisper of; which none had dared to sue of her in return. He had ventured to feel this for her! he had ventured to speak of this to her!

The Envoy saw the rising resentment, the pride spoken in every line of her delicate face, and stopped her as she would have spoken.

"Wait! I know all you would reply. You think it infinite daring, presumption that merits highest reproof—"

"Since you divined so justly, it were pity you subjected yourself and me to this most useless, most unexpected interview. Why—"

"Why? Because, perchance, in this life you will see my face no more, and you will think gently, mercifully of my offense (if offense it be to love you more than life, and only less than honor), when you know that I have fallen for the Cause, with your name in my heart, held only the dearer because never on my lips! Sincere love can be no insult to

whomsoever proffered; Elizabeth Stuart saw no shame to her in the devotion of William Craven!"

Cecil Castlemaine stood in the crimson glory of the autumn sunset, her head erect, her pride unshaken, but her heart stirred strangely and unwontedly. It smote the one with bitter pain, to think a penniless exile should thus dare to speak of what princes and dukes had almost feared to whisper; what had she done—what had she said, to give him license for such liberty? It stirred the other with a tremulous warmth, a vague, sweet pleasure, that were never visitants there before; but that she scouted instantly as weakness, folly, debasement, in the Last of the Castlemaines.

He saw well enough what passed within her, what made her eyes so troubled, yet her brow and lips so proudly set, and he bent nearer toward her, the great love that was in him trembling in his voice:

"Lady Cecil, hear me! If in the coming struggle I win distinction, honor, rank—if victory come to us, and the King we serve remember me in his prosperity as he does now in his adversity—if I can meet you hereafter with tidings of triumph and success, my name made one which England breathes with praise and pride, honors gained such as even you will deem worthy of your line—then—then—will you let me speak of what you refuse to hearken to now—then may I come to you, and seek a gentler answer?"

She looked for a moment upon his face, as it bent toward her in the radiance of the sunset light, the hope that hopes all things glistening in his eyes, the high-souled daring of a gallant and sanguine spirit flushing his forehead, the loud throbs of his heart audible in the stillness around; and her proud eyes grew softer, her lips quivered for an instant.

Then she turned toward him with queenly grace:

"Yes!"

It was spoken with stately dignity, though scarce above her breath; but the hue that wavered in her cheek was but the lovelier, for the pride that would not let her eyes droop nor her tears rise, would not let her utter one softer word. That one word cost her much. That single utterance was much from Cecil Castlemaine.

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She bowed her noble head, ever held haughtily, as though every crown of Europe had a right to circle it; his hot lips lingered for a moment on her hand; then Cecil Castlemaine stood alone in the window of her bower-room, her hand pressed again upon the opals under which her heart was heating with a dull, weary pain, looking out over the landscape, where the golden leaves were falling fast, and the river, tossing sadly dead branches on its waves, was bemoaning in plaintive language the summer days gone by.

Two months came and went, the beech boughs, black and sear, creaked in the bleak December winds that sighed through frozen ferns and over the couches of shivering deer, the snow drifted up on the marble terrace, and icedrops clung where the warm rosy petals of the musk rosebuds had nestled. Across the country came terrible whispers that struck the hearts of men of loyal faith to the White Rose with a bolt of ice-cold terror and despair. Messengers riding in hot haste, open-mouthed peasants gossiping by the village forge, horsemen who tarried for a breathless rest at alehouse doors, Whig divines who returned thanks for God's most gracious mercy in vouchsafing victory to the strong, all told the tale, all spread the news of the drawn battle of Sheriff-Muir, of the surrender under Preston walls, of the flight of Prince James. The tidings came one by one to Lilliesford, where my Lord Earl was holding himself in readiness to co-operate with the gentlemen of the North to set up the royal standard, broidered by his daughter's hands, in the western counties, and proclaim James III. "sovereign lord and king of the realms of Great Britain and Ireland."

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whomsoever proffered; Elizabeth Stuart saw no shame to her in the devotion of William Craven!"

Cecil Castlemaine stood in the crimson glory of the autumn sunset, her head erect, her pride unshaken, but her heart stirred strangely and unwontedly. It smote the one with bitter pain, to think a penniless exile should thus dare to speak of what princes and dukes had almost feared to whisper; what had she done—what had she said, to give him license for such liberty? It stirred the other with a tremulous warmth, a vague, sweet pleasure, that were never visitants there before; but that she scouted instantly as weakness, folly, debasement, in the Last of the Castlemaines.

He saw well enough what passed within her, what made her eyes so troubled, yet her brow and lips so proudly set, and he bent nearer toward her, the great love that was in him trembling in his voice:

"Lady Cecil, hear me! If in the coming struggle I win distinction, honor, rank—if victory come to us, and the King we serve remember me in his prosperity as he does now in his adversity—if I can meet you hereafter with tidings of triumph and success, my name made one which England breathes with praise and pride, honors gained such as even you will deem worthy of your line—then—then—will you let me speak of what you refuse to hearken to now—then may I come to you, and seek a gentler answer?"

She looked for a moment upon his face, as it bent toward her in the radiance of the sunset light, the hope that hopes all things glistening in his eyes, the high-souled daring of a gallant and sanguine spirit flushing his forehead, the loud throbs of his heart audible in the stillness around; and her proud eyes grew softer, her lips quivered for an instant.

Then she turned toward him with queenly grace:

"Yes!"

It was spoken with stately dignity, though scarce above her breath; but the hue that wavered in her cheek was but the lovelier, for the pride that would not let her eyes droop nor her tears rise, would not let her utter one softer word. That one word cost her much. That single utterance was much from Cecil Castlemaine.

Her handkerchief lay at her feet, a delicate, costly toy of lace, embroidered with her shield and chifre; he stooped and raised it, and thrust it in his breast to treasure it there.

"If I fail, I send this back in token that I renounce all hope; if I can come to you with honor and with fame, this shall be my gage that I may speak, that you will listen?"

She bowed her noble head, ever held haughtily, as though every crown of Europe had a right to circle it; his hot lips lingered for a moment on her hand; then Cecil Castlemaine stood alone in the window of her bower-room, her hand pressed again upon the opals under which her heart was heating with a dull, weary pain, looking out over the landscape, where the golden leaves were falling fast, and the river, tossing sadly dead branches on its waves, was bemoaning in plaintive language the summer days gone by.

Two months came and went, the beech boughs, black and sear, creaked in the bleak December winds that sighed through frozen ferns and over the couches of shivering deer, the snow drifted up on the marble terrace, and icedrops clung where the warm rosy petals of the musk rosebuds had nestled. Across the country came terrible whispers that struck the hearts of men of loyal faith to the White Rose with a bolt of ice-cold terror and despair. Messengers riding in hot haste, open-mouthed peasants gossiping by the village forge, horsemen who tarried for a breathless rest at alehouse doors, Whig divines who returned thanks for God's most gracious mercy in vouchsafing victory to the strong, all told the tale, all spread the news of the drawn battle of Sheriff-Muir, of the surrender under Preston walls, of the flight of Prince James. The tidings came one by one to Lilliesford, where my Lord Earl was holding himself in readiness to co-operate with the gentlemen of the North to set up the royal standard, broidered by his daughter's hands, in the western counties, and proclaim James III. "sovereign lord and king of the realms of Great Britain and Ireland."

closer sight. He was but a landless adventurer, with nothing but his sword and his honor, and kings he knew were slow to pay back benefits, or recollect the hands that hewed them free passage to their thrones.

Cecil Castlemaine stood within the window of her bower-room, the red light of the October sun glittering on her gold-broidered skirt and her corsage sewn with opals and emeralds; her hand was pressed lightly on her bosom, as though some pain were throbbing there; it was new this unrest, this weariness, this vague weight that hung upon her; it was the perils of their Cause, she told herself; the risks her father ran: it was weak, childish, unworthy a Castlemaine! Still the pain throbbed there.

Her hound, asleep beside her, raised his head with a low growl as a step intruded on the sanctity of the bower-room, then composed himself again to slumber, satisfied it was no foe. His mistress turned slowly; she knew the horses waited; she had shunned this ceremony of farewell, and never thought any would be bold enough to venture here without permission sought and gained.

"Lady Cecil, I could not go upon my way without one word of parting. Pardon me if I have been too rash to seek it here."

Why was it that his brief frank words ever pleased her better than Belamour's most honeyed phrases, Millamont's suavest periods? She scarcely could have told, save that there were in them an earnestness and truth new and rare to her ear and to her heart.

She pressed her hand closer on the opals—the jewels of calamity—and smiled:

"Assuredly I wish you God speed, Sir Fulke, and safe issue from all perils."

He bowed low; then raised himself to his fullest height, and stood beside her, watching the light play upon the opals:

"That is all you vouchsafe me?"

"All? It is as much as you would claim, sir, is it not? It is more than I would say to many."

"Your pardon—it is more than I should claim if prudence were ever by, if reason always ruled! I have no right to ask for, seek for, even wish for, more; such petitions may only be addressed by men of wealth and of high title; a landless soldier should have no pride to sting, no heart to wound; they are the prerogative of a happier fortune."

Her lips turned white, but she answered haughtily; the crimson light flashing in her jewels, heirlooms priceless and hereditary, like her beauty and her pride:

"This is strange language, sir! I fail to apprehend you."

"You have never thought that I ran a danger deadlier than that which I have ever risked on any field? You have never guessed that I have had the madness, the presumption, the crime—it may be in your eyes—to love you."

The color flushed to her face, crimsoning even her brow, and then fled back. Her first instinct was insulted pride—a beggared gentleman, a landless soldier, spoke to her of love!—of love!—which Belamour had barely had courage to whisper of; which none had dared to sue of her in return. He had ventured to feel this for her! he had ventured to speak of this to her!

The Envoy saw the rising resentment, the pride spoken in every line of her delicate face, and stopped her as she would have spoken.

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Perhaps amidst her grief for her Prince and for his cause mingled—as the deadliest thought of all—a memory of a bright proud face, that had bent toward her with tender love and touching grace a month before, and that might now be lying pale and cold, turned upward to the winter stars, on the field of Sheriff-Muir.

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She was the last of her name; her father, broken-hearted at the news from Dumblain and Preston, had died the very day after his lodgment in the Tower. There was no heir male of his line, and the title had passed to his daughter; there had been thoughts of confiscation and attainder, but others, unknown to her, solicited what she scorned to ask for herself, and the greed of the hungry "Hanoverian pack" spared the lands and the revenues of Lilliesford. In haughty pride, in lonely mourning, the fairest beauty of the Court and Town withdrew again to the solitude of her western counties, and tarried there, dwelling amidst her women and her almost regal household, in the sacred solitude of grief, wherein none might intrude. Proud Cecil Castlemaine was yet prouder than of yore; alone, sorrowing for her ruined Cause and exiled King, she would hold converse with none of those who had had a hand in drawing down the disastrous fate she mourned, and only her staghound could have seen the weariness upon her face when she bent down to him, or Gabrielle the falcon felt her hand tremble when it stroked her folded wings. She stood on the terrace, looking over her spreading lands, not the water-lilies on the river below whiter than her lips, pressed painfully together. Perhaps she repented of certain words, spoken to one whom now she would never again behold—perhaps she thought of that delicate toy that was to have been brought back in victory and hope, that now might lie stained and stiffened with blood next a lifeless heart, for never a word in the twelve months gone by had there come to Lilliesford as tidings of Fulke Ravensworth.

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The noon-hours chimed from the bell-tower, and the sunny beauty of the morning but weighed with heavier sadness on her heart; the song of the birds, the busy hum of the gnats, the joyous ring of the silver bell round her pet fawn's neck, as it darted from her side under the drooping boughs—none touched an answering chord of gladness in her. She stood looking over her stretching woodlands in deep thought, so deep that she heard no step over the lawn beneath, nor saw the frightened rush of the deer, as a boy, crouching among the tangled ferns, sprang up from his hiding-place under the beechen branches, and stood on the terrace before her, craving her pardon in childish, yet fearless tones. She turned, bending on him that glance which had made the over-bold glance of princes fall abashed. The boy was but a little tatterdemalion to have ventured thus abruptly into the presence of the Countess of Castlemaine; still it was with some touch of a page's grace that he bowed before her.

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"Your master?"

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The noon-hours chimed from the bell-tower, and the sunny beauty of the morning but weighed with heavier sadness on her heart; the song of the birds, the busy hum of the gnats, the joyous ring of the silver bell round her pet fawn's neck, as it darted from her side under the drooping boughs—none touched an answering chord of gladness in her. She stood looking over her stretching woodlands in deep thought, so deep that she heard no step over the lawn beneath, nor saw the frightened rush of the deer, as a boy, crouching among the tangled ferns, sprang up from his hiding-place under the beechen branches, and stood on the terrace before her, craving her pardon in childish, yet fearless tones. She turned, bending on him that glance which had made the over-bold glance of princes fall abashed. The boy was but a little tatterdemalion to have ventured thus abruptly into the presence of the Countess of Castlemaine; still it was with some touch of a page's grace that he bowed before her.

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"Your master?"

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"Sir Fulke sails for the French coast to-morrow night," the boy went on, in tremulous haste. "He was left for dead—our men ran one way, and Argyll's men the other—on the field of Sheriff-Muir; and sure if he had not been strong indeed, he would have died that awful night, untended, on the bleak moor, with the winds rearing round him, and his life ebbing away. He was not one of those who *fled*; you know that of him if you know aught. We got him away before dawn, Donald and I, and hid him in a shieling; he was in the fever then, and knew nothing that was done to him, only he kept that bit of lace in his hand for weeks and weeks, and would not let us stir it from his grasp. What magic there was in it we wondered often, but 'twas a magic, mayhap, that got him well at last; it was an even chance but that he'd died, God bless him! though we did what best we could. We've been wandering in the Highlands all the year, hiding here and tarrying there. Sir Fulke

The tidings came to Lilliesford, and Cecil Castlemaine clenched her white jeweled hands in passionate anguish that a Stuart should have fled before the traitor of Argyll, instead of dying with his face toward the rebel crew; that men had lived who could choose surrender instead of heroic death; that *she* had not been there, at Preston, to shame them with a woman's reading of courage and of loyalty, and show them how to fall with a doomed city rather than yield captive to a foe!

Perhaps amidst her grief for her Prince and for his cause mingled—as the deadliest thought of all—a memory of a bright proud face, that had bent toward her with tender love and touching grace a month before, and that might now be lying pale and cold, turned upward to the winter stars, on the field of Sheriff-Muir.

A year rolled by. Twelve months had fled since the gilded carriage of the Castlemaines, with the lordly blazonment upon its panels, its princely retinue and stately pomp, had come down into the western counties. The bones were crumbling white in the coffins in the Tower, and the skulls over Temple Bar had bleached white in winter snows and springtide suns; Kenmuir had gone to a sleep that knew no wakening, and Derwentwater had laid his fair young head down for a thankless cause; the heather bloomed over the mounds of dead on the plains of Sheriff-Muir, and the yellow gorse blossomed under the city walls of Preston.

Another summer had dawned, bright and laughing, over England; none the less fair for human lives laid down, for human hopes crushed out; daisies powdering the turf sodden with human blood, birds carolling their song over graves of heaped up dead. The musk-roses tossed their delicate heads again amidst the marble pilasters, and the hawthorn boughs shook their fragrant buds into the river at Lilliesford, the purple hills lay wrapped in sunny mist, and hyacinth bells mingled with the tangled grass and fern under the woodland shades, where the red deer nestled happily. Herons plumed their silvery wings down by the water side, swallows circled in sultry air above the great bell tower, and wood pigeons cooed with soft love notes among the leafy branches. Yet the Countess of Castlemaine, last of her race, sole owner of the lands that spread around her, stood on the rose terrace, finding no joy in the sunlight about her, no melody in the song of the birds.

She was the last of her name; her father, broken-hearted at the news from Dumblain and Preston, had died the very day after his lodgment in the Tower. There was no heir male of his line, and the title had passed to his daughter; there had been thoughts of confiscation and attainder, but others, unknown to her, solicited what she scorned to ask for herself, and the greed of the hungry "Hanoverian pack" spared the lands and the revenues of Lilliesford. In haughty pride, in lonely mourning, the fairest beauty of the Court and Town withdrew again to the solitude of her western counties, and tarried there, dwelling amidst her women and her almost regal household, in the sacred solitude of grief, wherein none might intrude. Proud Cecil Castlemaine was yet prouder than of yore; alone, sorrowing for her ruined Cause and exiled King, she would hold converse with none of those who had had a hand in drawing down the disastrous fate she mourned, and only her staghound could have seen the weariness upon her face when she bent down to him, or Gabrielle the falcon felt her hand tremble when it stroked her folded wings. She stood on the terrace, looking over her spreading lands, not the water-lilies on the river below whiter than her lips, pressed painfully together. Perhaps she repented of certain words, spoken to one whom now she would never again behold—perhaps she thought of that delicate toy that was to have been brought back in victory and hope, that now might lie stained and stiffened with blood next a lifeless heart, for never a word in the twelve months gone by had there come to Lilliesford as tidings of Fulke Ravensworth.

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Cecil Castlemaine let up her hold upon the boy, and her hand closed convulsively upon the dainty handkerchief—her gage sent so faithfully back to her!

The child looked upon her face; perchance, in his master's delirium, he had caught some knowledge of the story that hung that brodered toy.

"If you *are* his friend, madame, doubtless you have some last word to send him?"

Cecil Castlemaine, whom nothing moved, whom nothing softened, bowed her head at the simple question, her heart wrestling sorely, her lips set together in unswerving pride, a mist before her haughty eyes, the brodered shield upon her handkerchief—the shield of her stately and unyielding race—pressed close against her breast.

"You have no word for him, lady?"

Her lips parted; she signed him away. Was this child to see her yielding to such weakness? Had she, Countess of Castlemaine, no better pride, no better strength, no better power of resolve, than this?

The boy lingered.

"I will tell Sir Fulke then, lady, that the ruined have no friends?"

Whiter and prouder still grew the delicate beauty of her face; she raised her stately head, haughtily as she had used to glance over a glittering Court, where each voice murmured praise of her loveliness and reproach of her coldness; and placed the fragile toy of lace back in the boy's hands.

"Go, seek your master, and give him this in gage that their calamity makes friends more dear to us than their success. Go, he will know its meaning!"

In place of the noon chimes the curfew was ringing from the bell-tower, the swallows were gone to roost amidst the ivy, and the herons slept with their heads under their silvery wings among the rushes by the riverside, the ferns and wild hyacinths were damp with evening dew, and the summer starlight glistened amidst the quivering woodland leaves. There was the silence of coming night over the vast forest glades, and no sound broke the stillness, save the song of the grasshopper stirring the tangled grasses, or the sweet low sigh of the west wind fanning the bells of the flowers. Cecil Castlemaine stood once more on the rose-terrace, shrouded in the dense twilight shade flung from above by the beech-boughs, waiting, listening, catching every rustle of the leaves, every tremor of the heads of the roses, yet hearing nothing in the stillness around but the quick, uncertain throbs of her heart beating like the wing of a caged bird under its costly lace. Pride was forgotten at length, and she only remembered—fear and love.

In the silence and the solitude came a step that she knew, came a presence that she felt. She bowed her head upon her hands; it was new to her this weakness, this terror, this anguish of joy; she sought to calm herself, to steel herself, to summon back her pride, her strength; she scorned herself for it all!

His hand touched her, his voice fell on her ear once more, eager, breathless, broken.

"Cecil! Cecil! is this true? Is my ruin thrice blessed, or am I mad and dream of heaven?"

She lifted her head and looked at him with her old proud glance, her lips trembling with words that all her pride could not summon into speech; then her eyes filled with warm, blinding tears, and softened to new beauty—scarce louder than the sigh of the wind among the flower-bells came her words to Fulke Ravensworth's ear, as her royal head bowed on his breast.

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The kerchief is a treasured heirloom to her descendants now, and fair women of her race who inherit from her her azure eyes and her queenly grace, will recall how the proudest Countess of their Line loved a ruined gentleman so well that she was wedded to him at even, in her private chapel, at the hour of his greatest peril, his lowest fortune, and went with him across the seas till friendly intercession in high places gained them royal permission to dwell again at Lilliesford unmolested. And how it was ever noticeable to those who murmured at her coldness and her pride, that Cecil Castlemaine, cold and negligent as of yore to all the world beside, would seek her husband's smile, and love to meet his eyes, and cherish her beauty for his sake, and be restless in his absence, even for the short span of a day, with a softer and more clinging tenderness than was found in many weaker, many humbler women.

They are gone now the men and women of that generation, and their voices came only to us through the faint echo of their written words. In summer nights the old beech trees toss their leaves in the silvery light of the stars, and the river flows on unchanged, with the ceaseless, mournful burden of its mystic song, the same now as in mid-summer of a century and a half ago. The cobweb handkerchief lies before me with its brodered shield; the same now as long years since, when it was treasured close in a soldier's breast, and held by him dearer than all save his liquor and his word. So things pulseless and passionless endure, and human life passes away as swiftly as a song dies off from the air—as quickly succeeded, and as quickly forgot! Ronsard's refrain is the refrain of our lives:

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LITTLE GRAND AND THE MARCHIONESS;

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ALL first things are voted the best; first kisses, first *toga virilis*, first hair of the first whisker; first speeches are often so superior that members subside after making them, fearful of eclipsing themselves; first money won at play must always be the best, as it is always the dearest bought; and first wives are always so super-excellent, that, if a man lose one, he is generally as fearful of hazarding the second as a trout of biting twice.

But of all first things commend me to one's first uniform. No matter that we get sick of harness, and get into mutti as soon as we can now; there is no more exquisite pleasure than the first sight of one's self in shako and sabrestache. How we survey ourselves in the glass, and ring for hot water, that the handsome housemaid may see us in all our glory, and lounge accidentally into our sister's schoolroom, that the governess, who is nice looking and rather flirty, may go down on the spot before us and our scarlet and gold, chains and buttons! One's first uniform! Oh! the exquisite sensation locked up for us in that first box from Sagnarelli, or Bond street!

I remember *my* first uniform. I was eighteen—as raw a young cub as you could want to see. I had not been licked into shape by a public school, whose tongue may be rough, but cleans off grievances and nonsense better than anything else. I had been in that hotbed of effeminacy, Church principles and weak tea, a Private Tutor's, where mamma's darlings are wrapped up, and stuffed with a little Terence and Horace to show grand at home; and upon my life I do believe my sister Julia, aged thirteen, was more wide awake and up to life than I was, when the governor, an old rector, who always put me in mind of the Vicar of Wakefield, got me gazetted to as crack a corps as any in the Line.

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LITTLE GRAND AND THE MARCHIONESS;

OR,

OUR MALTESE PEERAGE.

ALL first things are voted the best; first kisses, first *toga virilis*, first hair of the first whisker; first speeches are often so superior that members subside after making them, fearful of eclipsing themselves; first money won at play must always be the best, as it is always the dearest bought; and first wives are always so super-excellent, that, if a man lose one, he is generally as fearful of hazarding the second as a trout of biting twice.

But of all first things commend me to one's first uniform. No matter that we get sick of harness, and get into mutti as soon as we can now; there is no more exquisite pleasure than the first sight of one's self in shako and sabrestache. How we survey ourselves in the glass, and ring for hot water, that the handsome housemaid may see us in all our glory, and lounge accidentally into our sister's schoolroom, that the governess, who is nice looking and rather flirty, may go down on the spot before us and our scarlet and gold, chains and buttons! One's first uniform! Oh! the exquisite sensation locked up for us in that first box from Sagnarelli, or Bond street!

I remember *my* first uniform. I was eighteen—as raw a young cub as you could want to see. I had not been licked into shape by a public school, whose tongue may be rough, but cleans off grievances and nonsense better than anything else. I had been in that hotbed of effeminacy, Church principles and weak tea, a Private Tutor's, where mamma's darlings are wrapped up, and stuffed with a little Terence and Horace to show grand at home; and upon my life I do believe my sister Julia, aged thirteen, was more wide awake and up to life than I was, when the governor, an old rector, who always put me in mind of the Vicar of Wakefield, got me gazetted to as crack a corps as any in the Line.

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sets no count upon his life. Sure I think he thanks us little for getting him through the fever of the wounds, but he could not have borne to be pinioned, you know, lady, like a thief, and hung up by the brutes of Whigs, as a butcher hangs sheep in the shambles! The worst of the danger's over—they've had their fill of the slaughter; but we sail to-morrow night for the French coast—England's no place for my master."

Cecil Castlemaine let up her hold upon the boy, and her hand closed convulsively upon the dainty handkerchief—her gage sent so faithfully back to her!

The child looked upon her face; perchance, in his master's delirium, he had caught some knowledge of the story that hung that brodered toy.

"If you *are* his friend, madame, doubtless you have some last word to send him?"

Cecil Castlemaine, whom nothing moved, whom nothing softened, bowed her head at the simple question, her heart wrestling sorely, her lips set together in unswerving pride, a mist before her haughty eyes, the brodered shield upon her handkerchief—the shield of her stately and unyielding race—pressed close against her breast.

"You have no word for him, lady?"

Her lips parted; she signed him away. Was this child to see her yielding to such weakness? Had she, Countess of Castlemaine, no better pride, no better strength, no better power of resolve, than this?

The boy lingered.

"I will tell Sir Fulke then, lady, that the ruined have no friends?"

Whiter and prouder still grew the delicate beauty of her face; she raised her stately head, haughtily as she had used to glance over a glittering Court, where each voice murmured praise of her loveliness and reproach of her coldness; and placed the fragile toy of lace back in the boy's hands.

"Go, seek your master, and give him this in gage that their calamity makes friends more dear to us than their success. Go, he will know its meaning!"

In place of the noon chimes the curfew was ringing from the bell-tower, the swallows were gone to roost amidst the ivy, and the herons slept with their heads under their silvery wings among the rushes by the riverside, the ferns and wild hyacinths were damp with evening dew, and the summer starlight glistened amidst the quivering woodland leaves. There was the silence of coming night over the vast forest glades, and no sound broke the stillness, save the song of the grasshopper stirring the tangled grasses, or the sweet low sigh of the west wind fanning the bells of the flowers. Cecil Castlemaine stood once more on the rose-terrace, shrouded in the dense twilight shade flung from above by the beech-boughs, waiting, listening, catching every rustle of the leaves, every tremor of the heads of the roses, yet hearing nothing in the stillness around but the quick, uncertain throbs of her heart beating like the wing of a caged bird under its costly lace. Pride was forgotten at length, and she only remembered—fear and love.

In the silence and the solitude came a step that she knew, came a presence that she felt. She bowed her head upon her hands; it was new to her this weakness, this terror, this anguish of joy; she sought to calm herself, to steel herself, to summon back her pride, her strength; she scorned herself for it all!

His hand touched her, his voice fell on her ear once more, eager, breathless, broken.

"Cecil! Cecil! is this true? Is my ruin thrice blessed, or am I mad and dream of heaven?"

She lifted her head and looked at him with her old proud glance, her lips trembling with words that all her pride could not summon into speech; then her eyes filled with warm, blinding tears, and softened to new beauty—scarce louder than the sigh of the wind among the flower-bells came her words to Fulke Ravensworth's ear, as her royal head bowed on his breast.

"Stay, stay! Or, if you fly, your exile shall be my exile, your danger my danger!"

The kerchief is a treasured heirloom to her descendants now, and fair women of her race who inherit from her her azure eyes and her queenly grace, will recall how the proudest Countess of their Line loved a ruined gentleman so well that she was wedded to him at even, in her private chapel, at the hour of his greatest peril, his lowest fortune, and went with him across the seas till friendly intercession in high places gained them royal permission to dwell again at Lilliesford unmolested. And how it was ever noticeable to those who murmured at her coldness and her pride, that Cecil Castlemaine, cold and negligent as of yore to all the world beside, would seek her husband's smile, and love to meet his eyes, and cherish her beauty for his sake, and be restless in his absence, even for the short span of a day, with a softer and more clinging tenderness than was found in many weaker, many humbler women.

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and with, among other trifles, a chest protector from my father, and a recipe for milk-arrowroot from my Aunt Matilda who lived in a constant state of catarrh and of cure for the same, tumbled across the Bay of Biscay, and found myself in Byron's confounded "little military hot-house," where most military men, some time or other, have roasted themselves to death, climbing its hilly streets, flirting with its Valetta belles, drinking Bass in its hot varandas, yawning with ennui in its palace, cursing its sirocco, and being done by its Jew sharpers.

From a private tutor's to a crack mess at Malta!—from a convent to a casino could hardly be a greater change. Just at first I was as much astray as a young pup taken into a stubble-field, and wondering what the deuce he is to do there; but as it is a pup's nature to sniff at birds and start them, so is it a boy's nature to snatch at the champagne of life as soon as he catches sight of it, though you may have brought him up on water from his cradle. I took to it, at least like a retriever to water-duck, though I was green enough to be a first-rate butt for many a day, and the practical jokes I had passed on me would have furnished the *Times* with food for crushers on "The Shocking State of the Army" for a twelvemonth. My chief friend and ally, tormentor and initiator, was a little fellow, Cosmo Grandison; in Ours he was "Little Grand" to everybody, from the Colonel to the baggage-women. He was seventeen, and had joined about a year. What a pretty boy he was, too! All the fair ones in Valetta, from his Excellency's wife to our washerwoman, admired that boy, and spoilt him and petted him, and I do not believe there was a man of Ours who would have had heart to sit in court-martial on Little Grand if he had broken every one of the Queen's regulations, and set every General Order at defiance. I think I see him now—he was new to Malta as I, having just landed with the *Dare Devils*, *en route* from India to Portsmouth—as he sat one day on the table in the mess-room as cool as a cucumber, in spite of the broiling sun, smoking and swinging his legs, and settling, his forage-cap on one side of his head, as pretty-looking, plucky, impudent a young monkey as ever piqued himself on being an old hand, and a knowing bird not to be caught by any chaff however ingeniously prepared.

"Simon, began Little Grand (my "St. John," first barbarized by Mr. Pope for the convenience of his dactyles and hexameters into Sinjin, being further barbarized by this little imp into Simon)—"Simon, do you want to see the finest woman in this confounded little pepper-box? You're no judge of a woman, though, you muff—taste been warped, perhaps, by constant contemplation of that virgin Aunt Minerva—Matilda, is it? all the same."

"Hang your chaff," said I; "you'd make one out a fool."

"Precisely, my dear Simon; just what you are!" responded Little Grand, pleasantly. "Bless your heart, I've been engaged to half a dozen women since I joined. A man can hardly help it, you see; they've such a way of drawing you on, you don't like to disappoint them, poor little dears, and so you compromise yourself out of sheer benevolence. There's such a run on a handsome man—it's a great bore. Sometimes I think I shall shave my head, or do something to disfigure myself, as Spurlina did. Poor fellow, I feel for him! Well, Simon, you don't seem curious to know who my beauty is?"

"One of those Mitchell girls of the Twenty-first? You waltzed with 'em all night; but they're too tall for you, Grand."

"The Mitchell girls!" ejaculated he, with supreme scorn. "Great maypoles! they go about with the Fusileers like a pair of colors. On every ball-room battle-field one's safe to see them flaunting away, and as everybody has a shot at 'em, their hearts must be pretty well riddled into holes by this time. No, mine's rather higher game than that. My mother's brother-in-law's aunt's sister's cousin's cousin once removed was Viscount Twaddle, and I don't go anything lower than the Peerage."

"What, is it somebody you've met at his Excellency's?"

"Wrong again, beloved Simon. It's nobody I've met at

old Stars and Garters', though his lady-wife could no more do without me than without her sal volatile and flirtations. No, *she* don't go there; she's too high for that sort of thing—sick of it. After all the European Courts, Malta must be rather small and slow. I was introduced to her yesterday, and," continued Little Grand, more solemnly than was his wont, "I do assure you she's superb, divine; and I'm not very easy to please."

"What's her name?" I asked, rather impressed with this view of a lady too high for old Stars and Garters, as we irreverently termed her Majesty's representative in her island of Malta.

Little Grand took his pipe out of his lips to correct me with more dignity.

"Her *title*, my dear Simon, is the Marchioness St. Julian."

"Is that an English peerage, Grand?"

"Hum! What! Oh yes, of course! What else should it be, you owl!"

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The Italian girl thus addressed looked up with a passion-

from valentines and odes in the "Woman, thou fond and fair deceiver" style; in love that turned its collars down and let its hair go uncut and refused to eat, and recovered with a rapidity proportionate to its ostentation; and I did not know, that if a man has lost his treasure, he *may* mourn it so deeply that he may refuse to run about like Harpagon, crying for his *cassette* to an audience that only laughs at his miseries.

"Well, young ones," said Conran, as he came in and threw down his cap and whip, "here you are, spending your hours in pipes and bad wine. What a blessing it is to have a palate that isn't blase, and that will swallow all wine just because it *is* wine! That South African goes down with better relish, Little Grand, than you'll find in Chateau Margaux ten years hence. As soon as one begins to want touching up with olives, one's real gusto is gone."

"Hang olives, sir! they're beastly," said Little Grand; "and I don't care who pretends they're not. Olives are like sermons and wives, everybody makes a wry face, and would rather be excused 'em, Major; but it's the custom to call 'em good things, and so men bolt 'em in complaisance, and while they hate the salt-water flavor, descant on the delicious rose taste!"

"Quite true, Little Grand! but one takes olives to enhance the wine; and so, perhaps, other men's sermons make one enjoy one's racier novel, and other men's wives make one appreciate one's liberty still better. Don't abuse olives; you'll want them figuratively and literally before you've done either drinking or living!"

"Oh! confound it, Major," cried Little Grand, "I do hope and trust a spent ball may have the kindness to double me up and finish me off before then."

"You're not philosophic, my boy."

"Thank Heaven, no!" ejaculated Little Grand, piously. "I've an uncle, a very great philosopher, beats all the sages hollow, from Bion to Buckle, and writes in the *Metaphysical Quarterly*, but I'll be shot if he don't spend so much time in trying to puzzle out what life is, that all his has slipped away without his having *lived* one bit. When I was staying with him one Christmas, he began boring me with a frightful theory on the non-existence of matter. I couldn't stand that, so I cut him short, and set him down to the luncheon-table; and while he was full swing with a Strasbourg pate and Comet hock, I stopped him and asked him if, with them in his mouth, he believed in matter or not? He was shut up, of course; bless your soul, those theorists always are, if you're down upon 'em with a little fact!"

"Such as a Strasbourg pate?—that *is* an unanswerable argument with most men, I believe," said Conran, who liked to hear the boy chatter. "What are you going to do with yourself to-night, Grand?"

"I am going to—ar—hum—to a friend of mine," said Little Grand, less glibly than usual.

"Very well; I only asked, because I would have taken you to Mrs. Fortescue's with me; they're having some acting proverbs (horrible exertion in this oven of a place, with the thermometer at a hundred and twenty degrees); but if you've better sport it's no matter. Take care what friends you make, though, Grand; you'll find some Maltese acquaintances very costly."

"Thank you. I should say I can take care of myself," replied Little Grand, with immeasurable scorn and dignity.

Conran laughed, struck him across the shoulders with his whip, stroked his own mustaches, and went out again whistling one of Verdi's airs.

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What with the wine, and the smoke, and the smiles, I wasn't quite clear as to whether I saw twenty horses' heads or one when I was fairly into saddle, and riding back to the town, just as the first dawn was rising, Aphrodite-like, from the far blue waves of the Mediterranean. Little Grand was better seasoned, but even he was dizzy with the parting words of the Marchioness, which had softly breathed the delicious passport, "Come to-morrow."

"By Jupiter!" swore Little Grand, obliged to give relief to his feelings—"by Jupiter, Simon! did you ever see such

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"Die!" I echoed, while my horse stumbled along up the hilly road, and I swayed forward, pretty nearly over his head, while poetry rushed to my lips, and electric sparks danced before my eyes:

"To die for those we love! oh, there is power
In the true heart, and pride, and joy, for this
It is to live without the vanished light
That strength is needed!"

"But I'll be shot if it shall be vanished light," returned Little Grand; "it don't look much like it yet. The light's only just lit, 'tisn't likely it's going out again directly; but she is a stunner! and—"

"A stunner!" I shouted; "she's much more than that—she's an angel, and I'll be much obliged to you to call her by her right name, sir. She's a beautiful, noble, loving woman; the most perfect of all Nature's master-works. She is divine, sir, and you and I are not worthy merely to kiss the hem of her garment."

"Ain't we, though? I don't care much about kissing her dress; it's silk, and I don't know that I should derive much pleasure from pressing my lips on its texture; but her cheek—"

"Her cheek is like the Catherine pear,
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"Bother classics! she's like herself, and beats 'em all hollow. She's the finest creature ever seen on earth, and I should like to see the man who'd dare to say she wasn't. And—I say, Simon—how much did you lose to-night?"

From sublimest heights I tumbled straight to bathos. The cold water of Grand's query quenched my poetry, extinguished my electric lights, and sobered me like a douche bath.

"I don't know," I answered, with a sense of awe and horror stealing over me; "but I had a pony in my waistcoat pocket that the governor had just sent me; Guatamara changed it for me, and—I've only sixpence left!"

"Old boy," said Little Grand to me the next morning, after early parade, "come in my room, and let's make up some dispatches to the governors. You see," he continued, five minutes after, "you see, we're both of us pretty well cleared out; I've only got half a pony, and you haven't a couple of fivers left. Now you know they evidently play rather high at the Casa di Fiori; do everything *en prince*, like nobbs who've Barclays at their back; and one mustn't hang fire; horrid shabby that would look. Besides, fancy seeming mean before her! So I've been thinking that, though governors are a screwy lot generally, if we put it to 'em clearly the sort of set we've got into, and show 'em that we can't help, now that we are at Rome, doing as the Romans do, I should say they could hardly help bleeding a little—eh? Now, listen how I've put it. My old boy has a weakness for titles; he married my mother on the relationship to Viscount Twaddles (who

ate, haughty flush, and answered, with wonderfully little courtesy I considered, "I shall not sing to-night."

"Are you unwell, fairest friend?" asked the Duc de Saint-Jeu, bending his little wiry figure over her.

She shrank away from him, and drew back, a hot color in her cheeks.

"Signore, I did not address you."

The Marchioness looked angry, if those devine eyes could look anything so mortal. However, she shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, my dear Lucrezia, we can't make you sing, of course, if you won't. I, for my part, always do any little thing I can to amuse anybody; if I fail, I fail; I have done my best, and my friends will appreciate the effort, if not the result. No, my dear Prince, do not tease her," said the Marchioness to Orangia Magnolia, who was arguing, I thought, somewhat imperatively for such a well-bred and courtly man, with Lucrezia; "we will have vingt-et-un, and Lucrezia will give us the delight of her voice some other evening, I dare say."

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The evening before we had happened to mention him, said he was a fellow of no end of tin, though as stupid an owl as ever spelt his own name wrong when he passed a military examination, and the Marchioness, recalling the name, said she remembered his father, and asked us to bring him to see her; which we did, fearing no rival in "old Heavy."

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And La Lucrezia sat, as she had sat the night before, by the open window, still and silent, the Cape jasmines and Southern creepers framing her in a soft moonlight picture, contrast enough to the brilliantly lighted room, echoing with laughter at Saint-Jeu's stories, perfumed with Cubas and narghiles, and shrouding the magnificent, full-blown, jeweled beauty of our Marchioness St. Julian, with which we were as rapidly, as madly, as unreasoningly, and as sentimentally in love as any boys of seventeen or eighteen ever could be. What greater latitude, you will exclaim, recalling certain buried-away episodes of your hobbedehoyism, when you addressed Latin distichs to that hazel-eyed Hebe who presided over oyster patties and water ices at the pastrycook's in Eton; or, ruined your governor's young plantations, cutting the name of Adeliza Mary, your cousin, at this day a portly person in velvet and point, whom you can now call, with a thanksgiving in the stead of the olden tremor, Mrs. Hector M'Cutchin? Yes, we were in love in a couple of evenings, Little Grand vehemently and unpoetically, I shyly and sentimentally, according to our temperaments, and as the fair Emily stirred feud between the two Noble Kinsmen, so the Marchioness St. Julian began to sow seeds of jealousy and detestation between us, sworn allies as we were. But "*le veritable amant ne connait point d'amis*" and as soon as we began to grow jealous of each other, Little Grand could have kicked me to the devil, and I could have kicked him with the greatest pleasure in life.

But I was shy, Little Grand was blessed with all the audacity imaginable; the consequence was, that when our horses came round, and the Maltese who acted as cherub was going to close the gates of Paradise upon us, he managed to slip into the Marchioness's boudoir to get a *tete-a-tete* farewell, while I strode up and down the veranda, not heeding Saint-Jeu, who was telling me a tale, to which, in any other saner moments, I should have listened greedily, but longing to execute on Little Grand some fierce and terrible vengeance, to which the vendetta should be baby's play. Saint-Jeu left me to put his arm over Harvey's shoulder and tell him if ever he came to Paris he should be transported to receive him at the Hotel de Millefleurs, and present him at the Tuileries; and I stood swearing to myself, and breaking off sprays of the

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"Signore, come here a moment."

It was that sweetly pretty mute whom we had barely noticed, absorbed as we were in the worship of our maturer idol, leaning out of the window, her cheeks flushed, her lips parted, her eyes sad and anxious. Of course I went to her, surprised at her waking up so suddenly to any interest in me. She put her hand on my coat sleeve and drew me down toward her.

"Listen to me a moment. I hardly know how to warn you, and yet I must. I cannot sit quietly by and see you and your young friends being deceived as so many have been before you. Do not come here again—do not—"

"*Figlia mia!* are you not afraid of the night-air?" said the Prince of Orangia Magnolia, just behind us.

His words were kind, but there was a nasty glitter in his eyes. Lucrezia answered him in passionate Italian—of which I had no knowledge—with such fire in her eyes, such haughty gesticulation, and such a torrent of words, that I really began to think, pretty soft little dear as she looked, that she must positively be a trifle out of her mind, her silence before, and her queer speech to me, seemed such odd behavior for a young lady in such high society. She was turning to me again when Little Grand came out into the veranda, looking flushed, proud, and self-complaisant, as such a winner and slayer of women would do. My hand clenched on the jasmine, I thirsted to spring on him as he stood there with his provoking, self-contented smile, and his confounded coxcombical air, and his cursed fair curls—*my* hair was dust-colored and as rebellious as porcupine quills—and wash out in his blood or mine—A touch of a soft hand thrilled through my every nerve and fibre; the Marchioness was there, and signed me to her. Lucrezia, Little Grand, and all the rest of the universe vanished from my mind at the lightning of that angel smile and the rustle of that moiré-antique dress. She beckoned me to her into the empty drawing-room.

"Augustus" (I never thought my name could sound so sweet before), "tell me what was my niece Lucrezia saying to you just now?"

Now I had a sad habit of telling the truth; it was an out-of-the-world custom taught me, among other old-fashioned things, at home, though I soon found how inconvenient a *betise* modern society considers it; and I blurted the truth out here, not distinctly or gracefully, though, as Little Grand would have done, for I was in that state of exaltation ordinarily expressed as not knowing whether one is standing in one's Wellingtons or not.

The Marchioness sighed.

"Ah, did she say that? Poor dear girl! She dislikes me so much, it is quite an hallucination, and yet, O Augustus, I have been to her like an elder sister, like a mother. Imagine how it grieves me," and the Marchioness shed some tears—pearls of price, thought I, worthy to drop from angels eyes—"It is a bitter sorrow to me, but, poor darling! she is not responsible."

She touched her veiny temple significantly as she spoke, and I understood, and felt tremendously shocked at it, that the young, fair Italian girl was a fierce and cruel maniac, who had the heart (oh! most extraordinary madness did it seem to me; if I had lost my senses I could never have harmed *her!*) to hate, absolutely hate, the noblest, tenderest, most beautiful of women?

"I never alluded to it to any one," continued the Marchioness. "Guatamara and Saint-Jeu, though such intimate friends, are ignorant of it. I would rather have any one think ever so badly of me, than reveal to them the cruel misfortune of my sweet Lucrezia—"

How noble she looked as she spoke!

"But you, Augustus, you," and she smiled upon me till I grew as dizzy as after my first taste of milk-punch, "I have not the courage to let *you* go off with any bad impression of me. I have known you a very little while, it is true—but a few hours, indeed—yet there are affinities of heart and soul

which overstep the bounds of time, and, laughing at the chill ties of ordinary custom, make strangers dearer than old friends—"

The room revolved round me, the lights danced up and down, my heart beat like Thor's hammer, and my pulse went as fast as a favorite saving the distance. *She* speaking so to me! My senses whirled round and round like fifty thousand witches on a Walpurgis Night, and down I went on my knees before my magnificent idol, raving away I couldn't tell you what now—the essence of everything I'd ever read, from Ovid to Alexander Smith. It must have been something frightful to hear, though Heaven knows I meant it earnestly enough. Suddenly I was pulled up with a jerk, as one throws an unbroken colt back on his haunches in the middle of his first start. *I thought I heard a laugh.*

She started up too. "Hush! another time! We may be overheard." And drawing her dress from my hands, which grasped it as agonizingly as a cockney grasps his saddle-bow, holding on for dear life over the Burton or Tedworth country, she stooped kindly over me, and floated away before I was recovered from the exquisite delirium of my ecstatic trance.

She loved me! This superb creature loved me! There was not a doubt of it; and how I got back to the barracks that night in my heavenly state of mind I could never have told. All I know is, that Grand and I never spoke a word, by tacit consent, all the way back; that I felt a fiendish delight when I saw his proud triumphant air, and thought how little he guessed, poor fellow!—And that Dream of One Fair Woman was as superior in rapture to the "Dream of Fair Women" as Turkey to the "Fine Fruity Port" that results from damsons and a decoction of sloes!

The next day there was a grand affair in Malta to receive some foreign Prince, whose name I do not remember now, who called on us *en route* to England. Of course all the troops turned out, and there was an inspection of us, and a grand luncheon and dinner, and ball, and all that sort of thing, which a month before I should have considered prime fun, but which now, as it kept me out of my paradise, I thought the most miserable bore that could possibly have chanced.

"I say," said Heavy to me as I was getting into harness—"I say, don't you wonder Fitzhervey and the Marchioness ain't coming to the palace to-day? One would have thought Old Stars and Garters would have been sure to ask them."

"Ask them? I should say so," I returned, with immeasurable disdain. "Of course he asked them; but she told me she shouldn't come, last night. She is so tired of such things. She came yachting with Fitzhervey solely to try and have a little quiet. She says people never give her a moment's rest while in Paris or London. She was sorry to disappoint Stars and Garters, but I don't think she likes his wife much: she don't consider her good ton."

On which information Heavy lapsed into a state of profoundest awe and wonderment, it having been one of his articles of faith, for the month that we had been in Malta, that the palace people were exalted demigods, whom it was only permissible to worship from a distance, and a very respectable distance too. Heavy had lost some twenty odd pounds the night before—of course we lost, young hands as we were, unaccustomed to the society of that entertaining gentleman, Pam—and had grumbled not a little at the loss of his gold bobs. But now I could see that such a contemptibly pecuniary matter was clean gone from his memory, and that he would have thought the world well lost for the honor of playing cards with people who could afford to disappoint Old Stars and Garters.

The inspection was over at last; and if any other than Conran had been my senior officer, I should have come off badly, in all probability, for the abominable manner in which I went through my evolutions. The day came to an end somehow or other, though I began to think it

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veranda creepers, when I heard somebody say, very softly and low:

"Signore, come here a moment."

It was that sweetly pretty mute whom we had barely noticed, absorbed as we were in the worship of our maturer idol, leaning out of the window, her cheeks flushed, her lips parted, her eyes sad and anxious. Of course I went to her, surprised at her waking up so suddenly to any interest in me. She put her hand on my coat sleeve and drew me down toward her.

"Listen to me a moment. I hardly know how to warn you, and yet I must. I cannot sit quietly by and see you and your young friends being deceived as so many have been before you. Do not come here again—do not—"

"*Figlia mia!* are you not afraid of the night-air?" said the Prince of Orangia Magnolia, just behind us.

His words were kind, but there was a nasty glitter in his eyes. Lucrezia answered him in passionate Italian—of which I had no knowledge—with such fire in her eyes, such haughty gesticulation, and such a torrent of words, that I really began to think, pretty soft little dear as she looked, that she must positively be a trifle out of her mind, her silence before, and her queer speech to me, seemed such odd behavior for a young lady in such high society. She was turning to me again when Little Grand came out into the veranda, looking flushed, proud, and self-complaisant, as such a winner and slayer of women would do. My hand clenched on the jasmine, I thirsted to spring on him as he stood there with his provoking, self-contented smile, and his confounded coxcombical air, and his cursed fair curls—*my* hair was dust-colored and as rebellious as porcupine quills—and wash out in his blood or mine—A touch of a soft hand thrilled through my every nerve and fibre; the Marchioness was there, and signed me to her. Lucrezia, Little Grand, and all the rest of the universe vanished from my mind at the lightning of that angel smile and the rustle of that moiré-antique dress. She beckoned me to her into the empty drawing-room.

"Augustus" (I never thought my name could sound so sweet before), "tell me what was my niece Lucrezia saying to you just now?"

Now I had a sad habit of telling the truth; it was an out-of-the-world custom taught me, among other old-fashioned things, at home, though I soon found how inconvenient a *betise* modern society considers it; and I blurted the truth out here, not distinctly or gracefully, though, as Little Grand would have done, for I was in that state of exaltation ordinarily expressed as not knowing whether one is standing in one's Wellingtons or not.

The Marchioness sighed.

"Ah, did she say that? Poor dear girl! She dislikes me so much, it is quite an hallucination, and yet, O Augustus, I have been to her like an elder sister, like a mother. Imagine how it grieves me," and the Marchioness shed some tears—pearls of price, thought I, worthy to drop from angels eyes—"It is a bitter sorrow to me, but, poor darling! she is not responsible."

She touched her veiny temple significantly as she spoke, and I understood, and felt tremendously shocked at it, that the young, fair Italian girl was a fierce and cruel maniac, who had the heart (oh! most extraordinary madness did it seem to me; if I had lost my senses I could never have harmed *her!*) to hate, absolutely hate, the noblest, tenderest, most beautiful of women?

"I never alluded to it to any one," continued the Marchioness. "Guatamara and Saint-Jeu, though such intimate friends, are ignorant of it. I would rather have any one think ever so badly of me, than reveal to them the cruel misfortune of my sweet Lucrezia—"

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"But you, Augustus, you," and she smiled upon me till I grew as dizzy as after my first taste of milk-punch, "I have not the courage to let *you* go off with any bad impression of me. I have known you a very little while, it is true—but a few hours, indeed—yet there are affinities of heart and soul

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Only fancy! she, that divine, *spirituelle* creature, who had talked but a few hours before of the affinity of souls, to have come down, like an ordinary woman, to Guinness's stout, and a checked dressing-gown and unbrushed locks! To find your prophet without his silver veil, or your Leila dead drowned in a sack, or your Guinevere flown over with Sir Lancelot to Boulogne, or your long-esteemed Griselda gone off with your cockaded Jeames, is nothing to the torture, the unutterable anguish, of seeing your angel, your divinity, your bright particular star, your hallowed Arabian rose, come down to—Bottled Porter! Do not talk to me of Dore, sir, or Mr. Martin's pictures; their horrors dwindle into insignificance compared with the horror of finding an intimate liaison between one's first love and Bottled Porter!

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I had not twenty minutes to stay, having to be back at the barracks, or risk a reprimand, which, happily, the checked *peignoir* had cooled me sufficiently to enable me to recollect. So I took my farewell—one not unlike Medora's and Conrad's, Fitzhervey and Guatamara having kindly withdrawn as soon as the bottled porter was finished—and I went out of the house in a very blissful state, despite Guinness and the unwelcome demi-toilette, which did not accord with Eugene Sue's and the Parlor Library description of the general getting up and stunning appearance of heroines and peeresses, "reclining, in robes of cloud-like tissue and folds of the richest lace, on a cabriole couch of amber velvet, while the air was filled with the voluptuous perfume of the flower-children of the south, and music from

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However, the *peignoir* had not iced me enough that time to prevent my tumbling out of the house in as delicious an ecstasy as if I had been eating some of Monte Cristo's "hatchis." As I went out, not looking before me, I came bang against the chest of somebody else, who, not admiring the rencontre, hit my cap over my eyes, and exclaimed, in not the most courtly manner, you will acknowledge, "You cursed owl, take that, then! What are you doing here, I should like to know?"

"Confound your impudence!" I retorted, as soon as my ocular powers were restored, and I saw the blue eyes, fair curls, and smart figure of my ancient Iolaus, now my bitterest foe—"confound your impertinence! what are you doing here? you mean."

"Take care, and don't ask questions about what doesn't concern you," returned Little Grand, with a laugh—a most irritating laugh. There are times when such cachinations sting one's ears more than a volley of oaths. "Go home and mind your own business, my chicken. You are a green bird, and nobody minds you, but still you'll find it as well not to come poaching on other men's manors."

"Other men's manors! Mine, if you please," I shouted, so mad with him I could have floored him where he stood.

"Phew!" laughed Little Grand, screwing up his lips into a contemptuous whistle, "you've been drinking too much Bass, my daisy; 'tisn't good for young heads—can't stand it. Go home, innocent."

The insult, the disdainful tone, froze my blood. My heart swelled with a sense of outraged dignity and injured manhood. With a conviction of my immeasurable superiority of position, as the beloved of that divine creature, I emancipated myself from the certain sort of slavery I was generally in to Little Grand, and spoke as I conceived it to be the habit of gentlemen whose honor had been wounded to speak.

"Mr. Grandison, you will pay for this insult. I shall expect satisfaction."

Little Grand laughed again—absolutely grinned, the audacious young imp—and he twelve months younger than I, too!

"Certainly, sir. If you wish to be made a target of, I shall be delighted to oblige you. I can't keep ladies waiting. It is always Place aux dames! with me; so, for the present, good morning?"

And off went the young coxcomb into the Casa di Fiori, and I, only consoled by the reflection of different reception he would receive to what mine had been (*he* had a braceleted bouquet, too, the young pretentious puppy!) started off again, assuaging my lacerated feelings with the delicious word of Satisfaction. I felt myself immeasurably raised above the heads of every other man in Malta—a perfect hero of romance; in fact, fit to figure in my beloved Alexandre's most highly-wrought yellow-papered *romen*, with a duel on my hands, and the love of a magnificent creature like my Eudoxia Adelaida. She had become Eudoxia Adelaida to me now, and I had forgiven, if not forgotten, the dirty dressing-gown: the bottled porter lay, of course, at Brodie's door. If he would condemn spiritual forms of life and light to the common realistic aliments of horrible barmaids and draymen, she could not help it, nor I either. If angels come

never would, the luncheon was ended, the bigwigs were taking their sieste, or otherwise occupied, and I, trusting to my absence not being noticed, tore off as hard as man can who has Cupid for his Pegasus. With a boquet as large as a drum-head, clasped round with a bracelet, about which I had many doubts as to the propriety of offering to the possessor of such jewelry as the Marchioness must have, yet on which I thought I might venture after the scene of last night, I was soon on the veranda of the Casa di Fiori, and my natural shyness being stimulated into a distant resemblance of Little Grand's enviable brass, seeing the windows of the drawing-room open, I pushed aside the green venetians and entered noiselessly. The room did not look a quarter so inviting as the night before, though it was left in precisely a similar state. I do not know how it was, but those cards lying about on the floor, those sconces with the wax run down a dripping over them, those emptied caraffes that had diffused an odor not yet dissipated, those tables and velvet couches all *a tort et a travers*, did not look so very inviting after all, and even to my unsophisticated senses, scarcely seemed fit for a Peeress.

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Though it was too warm, Conran went off into a fit of laughter.

I dare say our sublimity had a comic touch in it of which we never dreamt. "My dear boys, pray don't; it is too fatiguing. Come, Grand, what is it all about?"

"I deny your right to question me, Major," retorted Little Grand, in a fury. "What have you to do with it? I mean to punish that young owl yonder—who didn't know how to drink anything but milk-and-water, didn't know how to say bo! to a goose, till I taught him—for very abominable impertinence, and I'll—"

"My impertinence! I like that!" I shouted. "It is your unwarrantable, overbearing self-conceit, that makes you the laughing-stock of all the mess, which—"

"Silence!" said Conran's still stern voice, which subdued us into involuntary respect. "No more of this nonsense! Put up those pistols, Ruthven. You are two hot-headed, silly boys, who don't know for what you are quarrelling. Live a few years longer, and you won't be so eager to get into hot water, and put cartridges into your best friends. No, I shall not hear any more about it. If you do not instantly give me your words of honor not to attempt to repeat this folly, as your senior officer I shall put you under arrest for six weeks."

O Alexandre Dumas!—O Monte Cristo!—O heroes of yellow paper and pluck invincible! I ask pardon of your shades; I must record the fact, lowering and melancholy as it is, that before our senior officer our heroine melted like Vanille ice in the sun, our glories tumbled to the ground like twelfth-cake ornaments under children's fingers, and before the threat of arrest the lions lay down like lambs.

Conran sent us back, humbled, sulky and crestfallen, and resumed his solitary patrol upon the beach, where, before the sun was fairly up, he was having a shot at curlews. But if he was a little stern, he was no less kind-hearted; and in the afternoon of that day, while he lay after his siesta, smoking on his little bed, I unburdened myself to him. He did not laugh at me, though I saw a quizzical smile under his black mustaches.

"What is your divinity's name?" he asked, when I had finished.

"Eudoxia Adelaida, Marchioness St. Julian."

"The Marchioness St. Julian! Oh!"

"Do you know her?" I inquired, somewhat perplexed by his tone.

He smiled straight out this time.

"I don't know *her*, but there are a good many Peeresses in Malta and Gibraltar, and along the line of the Pacific, as my brother Ned, in the *Belisarius*, will tell you. I could count two score such of my acquaintance off at this minute."

I wondered what he meant. I dare say he knew all the Peerage; but that had nothing to do with me, and I thought it strange that all the Duchesses, and Countesses, and Baronesses should quit their country-seats and town-houses to locate themselves along the line of the Pacific.

"She's a fine woman, St. John?" he went on.

"Fine!" I reiterated, bursting into a panegyric, with which I won't bore you as I bored him.

"Well, you're going there to-night, you say; take me with you, and we'll see what I think of your Marchioness."

I looked at his fine figure and features, recalled certain tales of his conquests, remembered that he knew French, Italian, German and Spanish, but, not being able to refuse, acquiesced with a reluctance I could not entirely conceal. Conran, however, did not perceive it, and after mess took his cap, and went with me to the Casa di Fiori.

The rooms were all right again, my Marchioness was *en grande tenue*, amber silk, black lace, diamonds and all that sort of style. Fitzhervey and the other men were in evening dress, drinking coffee; there was not a trace of bottled porter anywhere, and it was all very brilliant and presentable. The Marchioness St. Julian rose with the warmest effusion.

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As he went across the veranda—that memorable veranda—I sitting in dudgeon near the other window, while Fitzhervey was proposing *ecarte* to Heavy, whom we had found there on our entrance, and the Marchioness had vanished into her boudoir for a moment, I saw the Roman girl spring out after him, and catch hold of his arm:

"Victor! Victor! for pity's sake!—I never thought we should meet like this!"

"Nor did I."

"Hush! hush! you will kill me. In mercy, say some kinder words!"

"I can say nothing—that it would be courteous to you to say."

I couldn't have been as inflexible, whatever her sins might have been, with her hands clasped on me, and her

face raised so close to mine. Lucrezia's voice changed to a piteous wail:

"You love me no longer, then?"

"Love!" said Conran, fiercely—"love! How dare you speak to me of love? I held you to be fond, innocent, true as Heaven; as such, you were dearer to me than life—as dear as honor. I loved you with as deep a passion as ever a man knew—Heaven help me! I love you now! How am I rewarded? By finding you the companion of blackguards, the associate of swindlers, one of the arch-intrigantes who lead on youths to ruin with base smiles and devilish arts. Then you dare talk to me of love!"

With those passionate words he threw her off him. She fell at his feet with a low moan. He either did not hear, or did not heed it; and I, bewildered by what I heard, mechanically went and lifted her from the ground. Lucrezia had not fainted, but she looked so wild, that I believed the Marchioness, and set her down as mad; but then Conran must be mad as well, which seemed too incredible a thing for me to swallow—our cool Major mad!

"Where does he live?" asked Lucrezia of me, in a breathless whisper.

"He? Who?"

"Victor—your officer—Signor Conran."

"Why, he lives in Valetta, of course."

"Can I find him there?"

"I dare say, if you want him."

"Want him! Oh, Santa Maria! is not his absence death? Can I find him?"

"Oh, yes, I dare say. Any body will show you Conran's rooms."

"Thank you."

With that, this mysterious young lady left me, and I turned in through the window again. Heavy and the men were playing at *lansequenet*, that most perilous, rapid, and bewitching of all the resistless card circes. There was no Marchioness, and having done it once with impunity I thought I might do it again, and lifted the amber curtain that divided the boudoir from the drawing-room. What did I behold? Oh! torture unexampled! Oh! fiendish agony! There was Little Grand—self-conceited, insulting, impertinent, abominable, unendurable Little Grand—on the amber satin couch, with the Marchioness leaning her head on his shoulder, and looking up in his thrice-confounded face with her most adorable smile, my smile, that had beamed, and, as I thought, beamed only upon me!

If Mephistopheles had been by to tempt me, I would have sold my soul to have wreaked vengeance on them both. Neither saw me, thank Heaven! and I had self-possession enough not to give them the cruel triumph of witnessing my anguish. I withdrew in silence, dropped the curtain, and rushed to bury my wrongs and sorrows in the friendly bosom of the gentle night. It was my first love, and I had made a fool of myself. The two are synonymous.

How I reached the barracks I never knew. All the night long I sat watching the stars out, raving to them of Eudoxia Adelaide, and cursing in plentiful anathemas my late Orestes. How should I bear his impudent grin every mortal night of my life across the mess-table? I tore up into shreds about a ream of paper, inscribed with tender sonnets to my faithless idol. I trampled into fifty thousand shreds a rosette off her dress, for which, fool-like, I had begged the day before. I smashed the looking-glass, which could only show me the image of a pitiful donkey. I called on Heaven to redress my wrongs. Oh! curse it! never was a fellow at once so utterly done for and so utterly done brown!

And in the vicarage, as I learnt afterwards, when my letter was received at home, there was great glorification and pleasure. My mother and the girls were enraptured at the high society darling Gussy was moving in; "but then, you know, mamma, dear Gussy's manners are so gentle, so gentleman-like, they are sure to please wherever he goes! Wherewith my mother cried and dried her eyes, and cried again, over that abominable letter copied from Little Grand's, and smelling of vilest tobacco."

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As he went across the veranda—that memorable veranda—I sitting in dudgeon near the other window, while Fitzhervey was proposing *ecarte* to Heavy, whom we had found there on our entrance, and the Marchioness had vanished into her boudoir for a moment, I saw the Roman girl spring out after him, and catch hold of his arm:

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The day Conran had really gone the length of offering to make an unknown Italian his wife, he went, for the first time in the evening, to Da Guari's house. The servant showed him in unannounced to a brightly-lighted chamber, reeking with wine and smoke, where a dozen men were playing *trente et quarante* at an amateur bank, and two or three others were gathered round what he had believed his own fair and pure Campagna flower. He understood it all; he turned away with a curse upon him. He wanted love and innocence; adventuresses he could have by the score, and he was sick to death of them. From that hour he never saw her again till he met her at the Casa di Fiori.

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"Plenty have been taken in like you, Gus," he said. "I was, years ago, in my youth, when I joined the army. There are scores of such women, as I told you, down the line of the Pacific, and about here; anywhere, in fact, where the army and navy give them fresh pigeons to be gulled. They take titles that sound grand in boys' ears, and fascinate them till they've won all their money, and then—send them to the dogs. Your Marchioness St. Julian's real name is Sarah Briggs."

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Accordingly, I stayed in his bedroom, where I had found him writing, and he went into his sitting room, of which, from the diminutiveness of his domicile, I commanded a full view, sit where I would. What was my astonishment to see Lucrezia! I went to his bedroom door; it was locked from the outside, so I perforce remained where I was, to, *volens volens*, witness the finish of last night's interview.

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"Signorina, I have judged you by only too ample evidence."

He had recovered himself now, and was as cool as needs be.

"I deny it. But you love me still?"

"Love you? More shame on me? A laugh, a compliment, a carcass, a cashmere, is as much as such women as you are worth. Love becomes ridiculous named in the same breath with you."

She caught hold of his hand and crushed it in both her own.

"Kill me if you will. Death would have no sting from your hand, but never speak such words to me."

Her voice trembled.

"How can I choose but speak them? You know that I believed you in Italy, and how on that belief I offered you my name—a name never yet stained, never yet held unworthy. I lost you, to find you in society which stamped you forever. A lovely fiend, holding raw boys enchained, that your associates might rifle their purses with marked cards and cogged dice. I hoped to have found a diamond, without spot or flaw. I discovered my error too late; it was only glass, which all men were free to pick up and trample on at their pleasure."

He tried to wrench his hand away, but she would not let it go.

"Hush! hush! listen to me first. If you once thought me worthy of your love, you may, surely, now accord me pity. I shall not trouble you long. After this, you need see me no more. I am going back to my old convent. You and the world will soon forget me, but I shall remember you, and pray for you, as dearer than my own soul."

Conran's head was bent down now, and his voice was thick, as he answered briefly:

"Go on."

This scene half consoled me for Eudoxia Adelaida—(I mean, O Heavens, Sarah Briggs!)—it was so exquisitely romantic, and Conran and Lucrezia wouldn't have done at all badly for Monte Cristo and that dear little Haidee. I was fearfully poetic in those days.

"When I met you in Rome," Lucrezia went on, in obedience to his injunction, "two years ago, you remember I had only left my convent and lived with my father but a month or two. I told you he was an officer. I only said what I had been told, and I knew no more than you that he was the keeper of a gambling-house."

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"Love you? More shame on me? A laugh, a compliment, a carcass, a cashmere, is as much as such women as you are worth. Love becomes ridiculous named in the same breath with you."

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"How can I choose but speak them? You know that I believed you in Italy, and how on that belief I offered you my name—a name never yet stained, never yet held unworthy. I lost you, to find you in society which stamped you forever. A lovely fiend, holding raw boys enchained, that your associates might rifle their purses with marked cards and cogged dice. I hoped to have found a diamond, without spot or flaw. I discovered my error too late; it was only glass, which all men were free to pick up and trample on at their pleasure."

He tried to wrench his hand away, but she would not let it go.

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Then entered a rectoress of a neighboring parish, to whom my mother and the girls related with innocent exultation of my grand friends at Malta; how Lord A. Fitzhervey was my sworn ally, and the Marchioness St. Julian had quite taken me under her wing. And the rectoress, having a son of her own, who was not doing anything so grand at Cambridge, but principally sopping beer at a Cherryinton public, smiled and was wrathful, and said to her lord at dinner:

"My dear, did you ever hear of a Marchioness St. Julian?"

"No, my love, I believe not—never."

"Is there one in the peerage?"

"Can't say, my dear. Look in Burke."

So the rectoress got Burke and closed it after deliberate inspection, with malignant satisfaction.

"I thought not. How ridiculous those St. Johns are about that ugly boy Augustus. As if Tom were not worth a hundred of him!"

I was too occupied with my own miseries then to think about Conran and Lucrezia, though sometime after I heard all about it. It seems, that, a year before, Conran was on leave in Rome, and at Rome, loitering about the Campagna one day, he made a chance acquaintance with an Italian girl, by getting some flowers for her she had tried to reach and could not. She was young, enthusiastic, intensely interesting, and had only an old Roman nurse, deaf as a post and purblind, with her. The girl was Lucrezia da Guari, and Lucrezia was lovely as one of her own myrtle or orange flowers. Somehow or other Conran went there the next day, and the next, and the next, and so on for a good many days, and always found Lucrezia. Now, Conran had at bottom a touch of unstirred romance, and, moreover, his own idea of what sort of woman he could love. Something in this untrained yet winning Campagna flower answered to both. He was old enough to trust his own discernment, and, after a month or two's walks and talks, Conran, one of the proudest men going, offered himself and his name to a Roman girl of whom he knew nothing, except that she seemed to care for him as he had had a fancy to be cared for all his life. It was a deucedly romantic thing—however, he did it! Lucrezia had told him her father was a military officer, but somehow or other this father never came to light, and when he called at their house—or rather rooms—Conran always found him out, which he thought queer, but, on the whole, rather providential, and he set the accident down to a foreigner's roaming habits.

The day Conran had really gone the length of offering to make an unknown Italian his wife, he went, for the first time in the evening, to Da Guari's house. The servant showed him in unannounced to a brightly-lighted chamber, reeking with wine and smoke, where a dozen men were playing *trente et quarante* at an amateur bank, and two or three others were gathered round what he had believed his own fair and pure Campagna flower. He understood it all; he turned away with a curse upon him. He wanted love and innocence; adventuresses he could have by the score, and he was sick to death of them. From that hour he never saw her again till he met her at the Casa di Fiori.

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"Plenty have been taken in like you, Gus," he said. "I was, years ago, in my youth, when I joined the army. There are scores of such women, as I told you, down the line of the Pacific, and about here; anywhere, in fact, where the army and navy give them fresh pigeons to be gulled. They take titles that sound grand in boys' ears, and fascinate them till they've won all their money, and then—send them to the dogs. Your Marchioness St. Julian's real name is Sarah Briggs."

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"She was a ballet-girl in London," continued Conran; "then, when she was sixteen, married that Fitzhervey, alias Briggs, alias Smith, alias what you please, and set up in her present more lucrative employment with her three or four confederates. Saint-Jeu was expelled from Paris for keeping a hell in the Chaussee d'Antin, Fitzhervey was a leg at Newmarket, Orangia Magnolia a lawyer's clerk who was had up for forgery, Guatamara is—by another name—a scoundrel of Rome. There is the history of your Maltese Peerage, Gussy. Well, you'll be wider awake next time. Wait, there is somebody at my door. Stay here a moment, I'll come back to you."

Accordingly, I stayed in his bedroom, where I had found him writing, and he went into his sitting room, of which, from the diminutiveness of his domicile, I commanded a full view, sit where I would. What was my astonishment to see Lucrezia! I went to his bedroom door; it was locked from the outside, so I perforce remained where I was, to, *volens volens*, witness the finish of last night's interview.

Stern to the last extent and deadly pale, Conran stood, too surprised to speak, and most probably at a loss for words.

Lucrezia came up to him nevertheless with the abandonment of youth and southern blood.

"Victor! Victor! let me speak to you. You shall listen; you shall not judge me unheard."

"Signorina, I have judged you by only too ample evidence."

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She shuddered as she paused, and leaned her forehead on Conran's hand. He did not repulse her, and she continued, in her broken, simple English:

"The evening you promised me what I should have needed to have been an angel to be worthy of—your love and your name—that very evening, when I reached home, my father bade me dress for a soiree he was going to give. I obeyed him, of course. I knew nothing but what he told me, and I went down, to find a dozen young nobles and a few Englishmen drinking and playing on a table covered with green cloth. Some few of them came up to me, but I felt frightened; their looks, their tones, their florid compliments, were so different to yours. But my father kept his eye on me, and would not let me leave. While they were leaning over my chair, and whispering in my ear, you came to the door of the salon, and I went toward you, and you looked cold and harsh, as I had never seen you before, and put me aside, and turned away without a word. Oh, Victor! why did you not kill me then? Death would have been kindness. Your Othello was kinder to Desdemona; he slew her—he did not leave her. From that hour I never saw you, and from that hour my father persecuted me because I would never join in his schemes, nor enter his vile gaming-rooms. Yet I have lived with him, because I could not get away. I have been too carefully watched. We Italians are not free, like your happy English girls. A few weeks ago we were compelled to leave Rome, the young Contino di Firenze had been stilettoed leaving my father's rooms, and he could stay in Italy no longer. We came here and joined that hateful woman, who calls herself Marchioness St. Julian; and, because she could not bend me to her will, gives out that I am her niece, and mad! I wonder I am not mad, Victor. I wish hearts would break as the romancers make them; but how long one suffers and lives on! Oh, my love, my soul, my life, only say that you believe me, and look kindly at me once again, then I will never trouble you again, I will only pray for you. But believe me, Victor. The Mother Superior of my convent will tell you it is the truth that I speak. Oh, for the love of Heaven, believe me! Believe me or I shall die!"

It was not in the nature of man to resist her; there was truth in the girl's voice and face, if ever truth walked abroad on earth. And Conran did believe her, and told her so in a few unconnected words, lifting her up in his arms, and vowing, with most unrighteous oaths, that her father should never have power to persecute her again as long as he himself lived to shelter and take care of her.

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having been loved and wronged, whereas I had only been playing the very common *role* of pigeon, I could not resist the temptation of going, just to take one last look of that fair, cruel face, and upbraid her with being the first to sow the fatal seeds of lifelong mistrust and misery in my only too fond and fatal, &c., &c., &c.

So, at the appointed hour, just when the sun was setting over the far-away Spanish shore, and the hush of night was sinking over the little, rocky, peppery, military-thick, Mediterranean isle, I found myself *en route* to the vineyards; which, till I came to Malta, had been one of my delusions, Idea picturing them in wreaths and avenues, Reality proving them hop-sticks and parched earth. I drew near; it was quite dark now, the sun had gone to sleep under the blue waves, and the moon was not yet up. Though I knew she was Sarah Briggs, and an adventuress who had made game of me, two facts that one would fancy might chill the passion out of anybody, so mad was I about that woman, that, if I had met her then and there, I should have let her wheedle me over, and gone back to the Casa di Fiori with her and been fleeced again: I am sure I should, sir, and so would you, if, at eighteen, new to life, you had fallen in with Eudox—pshaw!—with Sarah Briggs, my Marchioness St. Julian.

I drew near the vineyards: my heart beat thick, I could not see, but I certainly heard the rustle of her dress, caught the perfume of her hair. All her sins vanished: how could I upbraid her, though she were three times over Sarah Briggs? Yes, she was coming; I *felt* her near; an electric thrill rushed through me as soul met soul. I heard a murmured "Dearest, sweetest!" I felt the warm clasp of two arms, but—a cold row of undress waistcoat-buttons came against my face, and a voice I knew too well cried out, as I rebounded from him, impelled thereto by a not gentle kick—

"The devil? get out? Who the deuce are you?"

We both stopped for breath. At that minute up rose the silver moon, and in its tell-tale rays we glared on one another, I and Little Grand.

That silence was sublime: the pause between Beethoven's *andante allegro*—the second before the Spanish bull rushes upon the *terreador*.

"You little miserable wretch!" burst out Grand, slowly and terribly; "you little mean, sneaking, spying, contemptible milksop! I should like to know what you mean by bringing out your ugly phiz at this hour, when you used to be afraid of stirring out for fear of nurse's bogies? And to dare to come lurking after me!"

"After you, Mr. Grandison!" I repeated, with grandiloquence. "Really you put too much importance on your own movements. I came by appointment to meet the Marchioness St. Julian, whom, I presume, as you are well acquainted with her, you know in her real name of Sarah Briggs, and to—"

"Sarah Briggs!—you come by appointment?" stammered Little Grand.

"Yes, sir; if you disbelieve my word of honor, I will condescend to show you my invitation."

"You little ape!" swore Grand, coming back to his previous wrath; "it is a lie, a most abominable unwarrantable lie! I came by appointment, sir; you did no such thing. Look there!"

And he flaunted before my eyes in the moonlight the facsimile of my letter, verbatim copy, save that in his *Cosmo* was put in the stead of Augustus.

"Look there!" said I, giving him mine.

Little Grand snatched it, read it over once, twice, thrice, then drooped his head, with a burning color in his face, and was silent.

The "knowing hand" was done!

We were both of us uncommonly quiet for ten minutes, neither of us liked to be the first to give in.

At last Little Grand looked up and held out his hand, no more nonsense about him now.

"Simon, you and I have been two great fools; we can't

She shuddered as she paused, and leaned her forehead on Conran's hand. He did not repulse her, and she continued, in her broken, simple English:

"The evening you promised me what I should have needed to have been an angel to be worthy of—your love and your name—that very evening, when I reached home, my father bade me dress for a soiree he was going to give. I obeyed him, of course. I knew nothing but what he told me, and I went down, to find a dozen young nobles and a few Englishmen drinking and playing on a table covered with green cloth. Some few of them came up to me, but I felt frightened; their looks, their tones, their florid compliments, were so different to yours. But my father kept his eye on me, and would not let me leave. While they were leaning over my chair, and whispering in my ear, you came to the door of the salon, and I went toward you, and you looked cold and harsh, as I had never seen you before, and put me aside, and turned away without a word. Oh, Victor! why did you not kill me then? Death would have been kindness. Your Othello was kinder to Desdemona; he slew her—he did not leave her. From that hour I never saw you, and from that hour my father persecuted me because I would never join in his schemes, nor enter his vile gaming-rooms. Yet I have lived with him, because I could not get away. I have been too carefully watched. We Italians are not free, like your happy English girls. A few weeks ago we were compelled to leave Rome, the young Contino di Firenze had been stilettoed leaving my father's rooms, and he could stay in Italy no longer. We came here and joined that hateful woman, who calls herself Marchioness St. Julian; and, because she could not bend me to her will, gives out that I am her niece, and mad! I wonder I am not mad, Victor. I wish hearts would break as the romancers make them; but how long one suffers and lives on! Oh, my love, my soul, my life, only say that you believe me, and look kindly at me once again, then I will never trouble you again, I will only pray for you. But believe me, Victor. The Mother Superior of my convent will tell you it is the truth that I speak. Oh, for the love of Heaven, believe me! Believe me or I shall die!"

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So, at the appointed hour, just when the sun was setting over the far-away Spanish shore, and the hush of night was sinking over the little, rocky, peppery, military-thick, Mediterranean isle, I found myself *en route* to the vineyards; which, till I came to Malta, had been one of my delusions, Idea picturing them in wreaths and avenues, Reality proving them hop-sticks and parched earth. I drew near; it was quite dark now, the sun had gone to sleep under the blue waves, and the moon was not yet up. Though I knew she was Sarah Briggs, and an adventuress who had made game of me, two facts that one would fancy might chill the passion out of anybody, so mad was I about that woman, that, if I had met her then and there, I should have let her wheedle me over, and gone back to the Casa di Fiori with her and been fleeced again: I am sure I should, sir, and so would you, if, at eighteen, new to life, you had fallen in with Eudox—pshaw!—with Sarah Briggs, my Marchioness St. Julian.

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LADY MARABOUT'S TROUBLES;

OR,

THE WORRIES OF A CHAPERONE.

IN THREE SEASONS.

SEASON THE FIRST.—THE ELIGIBLE.

ONE of the kindest-natured persons that I ever knew on this earth, where kind people are as rare as black eagles or red deer, is Helena, Countess of Marabout, *nee* De Boncœur. She has foibles, she has weaknesses—who amongst us has not?—she will wear her dresses *decolletees*, though she's sixty, if Burke tells us truth; she will rouge and practice a thousand other little toilette tricks; but they are surely innocent, since they deceive nobody; and if you wait for a woman who has no artifices, I am afraid you shall have to forswear the sex *in toto*, my friends, and come growling back to your Diogenes' tub in the Albany, with your lantern still lit every day of your lives.

Lady Marabout is a very charming person. As for her weaknesses, she is all the nicer for them, to my taste. I like people with weaknesses myself; those without them do look so dreadfully scornfully and unsympathizingly upon one from the altitude of their superiority, *de toute la hauteur de sa betise*, as a witty Frenchman says. Humanity was born with weaknesses. If I were a beggar, I might hope for a coin from a man with some; a man without any, I know, would shut up his porte-monnaie, with an intensified click, to make me feel trebly envious, and consign me to D. 15 and his truncheon, on the score of vagrancy.

Lady Marabout is a very charming person, despite her little foibles, and she gives very pleasant little dinners, both at her house in Lowndes Square and in her jointure villa at Twickenham, where the bad odors of Thames are drowned in the fragrance of the geraniums, piled in great heaps of red, white, and variegated blossom in the flower-beds on the lawn. She has been married twice, but has only one son, by her first union—Carruthers, of the Guards—a very good fellow, whom his mother thinks perfection, though if she *did* know certain scenes in her adored Philip's life, the good lady might hesitate before she endowed her son with all the cardinal virtues as she does at the present moment. She has no daughters, therefore you will wonder to hear that the prime misery, burden, discomfort and worry of her life is chaperonage. But so it is.

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"To give us a finishing hoax, I suppose," I suggested.

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"I suppose so. What fools we have been, Simon! And, I say, I've borrowed three hundred of old Miraflores, and it's all gone up at that devilish Casa; and how I shall get it from the governor, Heaven knows, for I don't."

"I'm in the same pickle, Grand," I groaned. "I've given that old rascal notes of hand for two hundred pounds, and, if it don't drop from the clouds, I shall never pay it. Oh, I say, Grand, love comes deucedly expensive."

"Ah!" said he, with a sympathetic shiver, "think what a pair of hunters we might have had for the money!" With which dismal and remorseful remembrance the old bird, who had been trapped like a young pigeon, swore mightily, and withdrew into humbled and disgusted silence.

Next morning we heard, to our comfort—what lots of people there always are to tell us how to lock our stable-door when our solitary mare has been stolen—that, with a gentle hint from the police, the Marchioness St. Julian, with her *confreres*, had taken wing to the Ionian isles, where at Corfu or Cephalonia, they will re-erect the Casa di Fiori, and glide gently on again from vingt-et-un to loo, and from loo to lasquet, under eyes as young and blinded as our own. They went without Lucrezia. Conran took her into his own hands. Any other man in the regiment would have been pretty well ridiculed at taking a bride out of the Casa di Fiori; but the statements made by the high-born Abbess of her Roman convert were so clear, and so to the girl's honor, and he had such a way of holding his own, of keeping off liberties from himself and anything belonging to him, and was, moreover, known to be of such fastidious honor, that his young wife was received as if she had been a Princess in her own right. With her respected parent Conran had a brief interview previous to his flight from Malta, in which, with a few gentle hints, he showed that worthy that it would be wiser to leave his daughter unmolested for the future, and I doubt if Mr. Orangia Magnolia, *alias* Pepe Guari, would know his own child in the joyous, graceful, daintily-dressed mistress of Conran's handsome Parisian establishment.

Little Grand and I suffered cruelly. We were the butts of the mess for many a long month afterwards, when every idiot's tongue asked us on every side after the health of the Marchioness St. Julian? when we were going to teach them lasquet? how often we heard from the aristocratic members of the Maltese Peerage? with like delightful pleasantries, which the questioners deemed high wit. We paid for it, too, to that arch old screw, Balthazar; but I doubt very much if the money were not well lost, and the experience well gained. It cured me of my rawness and Little Grand of his self-conceit, the only thing that had before spoilt that good-hearted, quick-tempered, and clever-brained little fellow. Oh, Pater and Materfamilias, disturb not yourself so unnecessarily about the crop of wild oats which your young ones are sowing broadcast. Those wild oats often spring from a good field of high spirit, hot courage, and thoughtless generosity, that are the sign and basis of nobler virtues to come, and from them very often rise two goodly plants—Experience and Discernment.

LADY MARABOUT'S TROUBLES;

OR,

THE WORRIES OF A CHAPERONE.

IN THREE SEASONS.

SEASON THE FIRST.—THE ELIGIBLE.

ONE of the kindest-natured persons that I ever knew on this earth, where kind people are as rare as black eagles or red deer, is Helena, Countess of Marabout, *nee* De Boncœur. She has foibles, she has weaknesses—who amongst us has not?—she will wear her dresses *decolletees*, though she's sixty, if Burke tells us truth; she will rouge and practice a thousand other little toilette tricks; but they are surely innocent, since they deceive nobody; and if you wait for a woman who has no artifices, I am afraid you shall have to forswear the sex *in toto*, my friends, and come growling back to your Diogenes' tub in the Albany, with your lantern still lit every day of your lives.

Lady Marabout is a very charming person. As for her weaknesses, she is all the nicer for them, to my taste. I like people with weaknesses myself; those without them do look so dreadfully scornfully and unsympathizingly upon one from the altitude of their superiority, *de toute la hauteur de sa betise*, as a witty Frenchman says. Humanity was born with weaknesses. If I were a beggar, I might hope for a coin from a man with some; a man without any, I know, would shut up his porte-monnaie, with an intensified click, to make me feel trebly envious, and consign me to D. 15 and his truncheon, on the score of vagrancy.

Lady Marabout is a very charming person, despite her little foibles, and she gives very pleasant little dinners, both at her house in Lowndes Square and in her jointure villa at Twickenham, where the bad odors of Thames are drowned in the fragrance of the geraniums, piled in great heaps of red, white, and variegated blossom in the flower-beds on the lawn. She has been married twice, but has only one son, by her first union—Carruthers, of the Guards—a very good fellow, whom his mother thinks perfection, though if she *did* know certain scenes in her adored Philip's life, the good lady might hesitate before she endowed her son with all the cardinal virtues as she does at the present moment. She has no daughters, therefore you will wonder to hear that the prime misery, burden, discomfort and worry of her life is chaperonage. But so it is.

Lady Marabout is the essence of good nature; she can't say No; that unpleasant negative monosyllable was never heard to issue from her full, smiling, kind-looking lips; she is in a high position, she has an extensive circle, thanks to her own family and those of the baronet and peer she successively espoused; and some sister or cousin, or friend, is incessantly hunting her up to bring out their girls, and sell them well off out of hand, young ladies being goods extremely likely to hang on hand nowadays.

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"What's the matter, mother?" asked Carruthers, one morning. He's very fond of his mother, and will never let any one laugh at her in his hearing.

"Matter? Everything!" replied Lady Marabout, concisely and comprehensively, as she sat on the sofa in her boudoir, with her white-ringed hands and her *bien conserve* look, and her kindly pleasant eyes, and her rich dress; one could see what a pretty woman she has been, and that Carruthers may thank her for his good looks. "To begin with, Felicie has been so stupid as to marry—married the green grocer (whom she will ruin in a week!)—and has left me to the mercies of a stupid woman who puts pink with cerise, mauve with magenta, and sky-blue with azureline, and has no recommendation except that she is as ugly as the Medusa, and so will not tempt you to—"

"Make love to her, as I did to Marie," laughed Carruthers. "Marie was a pretty little dear; it was very severe in you to send her away."

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"No; Bijou isn't such a gourmet. You judge him by yourself, I suppose; men always do! Then Lady Hautton told me last night that you were the wildest man on town, and at forty—"

"You think I ought to ranger! So I will, my dear mother, some day; but at present I am—so very comfortable; it would be a pity to alter! What pains one's friends are always at to tell unpalatable things; if they would but be only half so eager to tell us the pleasant ones! I shall expect you to cut Lady Hautton if she speak badly of me. I can't afford to lose your worship, mother!"

"My worship? How conceited you are, Phillip! As for Lady Hautton, I believe she does dislike you, because you did not engage yourself to Adelina, and were selected aide-de-camp to Her Majesty instead of Hautton; still, I am afraid she spoke too nearly the truth."

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"My poor, dear mother!" cried Carruthers. "I grant you are an object of pity. You are everlastingly having young filies sent you to break in, and they want such a tight hand on the ribbons."

"And a tight hand as you call it, I never had, and never shall have," sighed Lady Marabout. "Valencia will be no trouble to me on that score, however; she has been admirably educated, knows all that is due to her position, and will never give me a moment's anxiety by any imprudence or inadvertence. But she is excessively handsome, and a beauty is a great responsibility when she first comes out."

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"Abominably rude of you and your friends to talk to me in your turfslang! I wish you would come and bid at the sale, Philip; I should like to see you married—well married, of course."

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"Goodwood? Of course he would; he would do for any one; the Dukedom is the oldest in the peerage. Goodwood is highly eligible. Thank you for reminding me, Philip. Since Valencia is coming, I must do my best for her." Which phrase meant with Lady Marabout that she must be very lynx-eyed as to settlements, and a perfect dragon to all detrimental connections, must frown with Medusa severity on all horrors of younger sons, and advocate with all the weight of personal experience the advantage and *agremens* of a good position, in all of which practicalities she generally broke down, with humiliation unspeakable, immediately her heart was enlisted and her sympathies appealed to on the enemy's side. She sighed, played with her bracelets thoughtfully, and then, heroically resigning herself to her impending fate, brightened up a little, and asked her son to go and choose a new pair of carriage-horses for her.

"Valencia will give me little trouble, I hope. So admirably brought-up a girl, and so handsome as she is, will be sure to marry soon, and marry well," thought Lady Marabout, self-congratulatory, as she dressed for dinner the day of her niece's arrival in town, running over mentally the qualifications and attractions of Valencia Valletort, while Felicie's successor, Mademoiselle Despreaux, whose crime was then to put pink with cerise, mauve with magenta, and sky-blue with azureline, gave the finishing touches to her toilette—"Valencia will give me no trouble; she has all the De Boncœur beauty, with the Valletort dignity. Who would do for her? Let me see; eligible men are not abundant, and those that are eligible are shy of being marked as Philip would say—perhaps from being hunted so much, poor things! There is Fulke Nugent, heir to a barony, and his father is ninety—very rich, too—he would do; and Philip's friend, Caradoc, poor, I know, but their Earldom's the oldest peerage patent. There is Eyre Lee, too; I don't much like the man, supercilious and empty-headed; still he's an unobjectionable alliance. And there is Goodwood. Every one has tried for Goodwood, and failed. I should like Valencia to win him; he is decidedly the most eligible man in town. I will invite him to dinner. If he is not attracted by Valencia's beauty, nothing can attract him—*Despreaux, comme vous êtes bete. Otez ces panaches, de grace.*"

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"Matter? Everything!" replied Lady Marabout, concisely and comprehensively, as she sat on the sofa in her boudoir, with her white-ringed hands and her *bien conserve* look, and her kindly pleasant eyes, and her rich dress; one could see what a pretty woman she has been, and that Carruthers may thank her for his good looks. "To begin with, Felicie has been so stupid as to marry—married the green grocer (whom she will ruin in a week!)—and has left me to the mercies of a stupid woman who puts pink with cerise, mauve with magenta, and sky-blue with azureline, and has no recommendation except that she is as ugly as the Medusa, and so will not tempt you to—"

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"No; Bijou isn't such a gourmet. You judge him by yourself, I suppose; men always do! Then Lady Hautton told me last night that you were the wildest man on town, and at forty—"

"You think I ought to ranger! So I will, my dear mother, some day; but at present I am—so very comfortable; it would be a pity to alter! What pains one's friends are always at to tell unpalatable things; if they would but be only half so eager to tell us the pleasant ones! I shall expect you to cut Lady Hautton if she speak badly of me. I can't afford to lose your worship, mother!"

"My worship? How conceited you are, Phillip! As for Lady Hautton, I believe she does dislike you, because you did not engage yourself to Adelina, and were selected aide-de-camp to Her Majesty instead of Hautton; still, I am afraid she spoke too nearly the truth."

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"My poor, dear mother!" cried Carruthers. "I grant you are an object of pity. You are everlastingly having young filies sent you to break in, and they want such a tight hand on the ribbons."

"And a tight hand as you call it, I never had, and never shall have," sighed Lady Marabout. "Valencia will be no trouble to me on that score, however; she has been admirably educated, knows all that is due to her position, and will never give me a moment's anxiety by any imprudence or inadvertence. But she is excessively handsome, and a beauty is a great responsibility when she first comes out."

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"Goodwood? Of course he would; he would do for any one; the Dukedom is the oldest in the peerage. Goodwood is highly eligible. Thank you for reminding me, Philip. Since Valencia is coming, I must do my best for her." Which phrase meant with Lady Marabout that she must be very lynx-eyed as to settlements, and a perfect dragon to all detrimental connections, must frown with Medusa severity on all horrors of younger sons, and advocate with all the weight of personal experience the advantage and *agremens* of a good position, in all of which practicalities she generally broke down, with humiliation unspeakable, immediately her heart was enlisted and her sympathies appealed to on the enemy's side. She sighed, played with her bracelets thoughtfully, and then, heroically resigning herself to her impending fate, brightened up a little, and asked her son to go and choose a new pair of carriage-horses for her.

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"I must consider, Philip, I have brought out the beauty of the season," said Lady Marabout to Carruthers, eyeing her niece as she danced at her first ball at the Dowager-Duchess of Amandine's, and beginning to brighten up a little under the weight of her responsibilities.

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Leucadia and the Beatrice, for which her gardner had won the prize the day before at the Regent's Park Show—"dear me! why is there invariably this sort of cross-purposes in everything? It will be so grievous to lose Goodwood, (and he is decidedly struck with her; when he bought that rosebud yesterday of her at the bazaar, and put it in the breast of his waistcoat, I heard what he said, and it was no nonsense, no mere flirting complaisance either)—it would be so grievous to lose him; and yet if Valencia really cared for Cardonnel—and sometimes I almost fancy she does—I shouldn't know which way to advise. I thought it would be odd if a season could pass quietly without my having some worry of this sort!"

Carruthers was quite right. One fellow at least had lost his head after the beauty of the season, and he was Cardonnel, of the—Lancers, as fine a fellow, as Philip said, as any in the Queen's, but a dreadful detrimental in the eyes of all chaperones, because he was but the fourth son of one of the poorest peers in the United Kingdom, a fact which gave him an ægis from all assaults matrimonial, and a freedom from all smiles and wiles, traps and gins, which Goodwood was accustomed to tell him he bitterly envied him, and on which Cardonnel had fervently congratulated himself, till he came under the fire of the Hon. Val's large luminous eyes one night, when he was leveling his glass from his stall at Lady Marabout's box, to take a look at the new belle, as advised to do by that most fastidious female critic, Vane Steinberg. Valencia Valletort's luminous eyes had gleamed that night under their lashes, and pierced through the lenses of his lorgnon. He saw her, and saw nothing but her afterwards, as men looking on the sun keep it on their retina to the damage and exclusion of all other objects.

Goodwood's attentions were very marked, too, even to eyes less willing to construe them so than Lady Marabout's. Goodwood himself, if chaffed on the subject, vouchsafed nothing; laughed, stroked his moustaches, or puffed his cigar, if he happened to have that blessed resource in all difficulties, and comforter under all embarrassments, between his lips at the moment; but decidedly he sought Valencia Valletort more, or, to speak more correctly, he shunned her less than he'd ever done any other young lady, and one or two Sunday mornings—*mirabile dictu*—he was positively seen at St. Paul's, Knightbridge, in the seat behind Lady Marabout's sittings. A fact which, combining as it did a brace of miracles at once, of early rising and unusual piety, set every Belgravienne in that fashionable sanctuary watching over the top of her illuminated prayer book, to the utter destruction of her hopes and interruption of her orisons.

Dowagers began to tremble behind their fans, young ladies to quake over their bouquets; the topic was eagerly discussed by every woman from Clarges street to London Square; their Graces of Doncaster smiled well pleased on Valencia—she was unquestionable blood, and they so wished dear Goodwood to settle! There was whispered an awful whisper to the whole female world; whispered over matutinal chocolate, and luncheon Strasbourg pates, ball-supper Moets, and demi-monde-supper Silleri, over Vane Steinberg's cigar and Eulalie Rosiere's cigarette, over the *Morning Post* in the clubs, and *Le Follet* in the boudoir, that—the Pet Eligible would—marry! That the Pet Prophecy of universal smash was going to be fulfilled could hardly have occasioned greater consternation.

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"Goodwin's attentions are serious, Philip, say what you like," said her ladyship, at a morning party at Kew, eating her Neapolitan ice, complacently glancing at the "most eligible alliance of the season," who was throwing the balls at lawn-billiards, and talking between whiles to the Hon. Val with praiseworthy and promising animation.

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"She does like him!" sighed Lady Marabout over that Sabbath's luncheon wines. "It's always my fate—always; and Goodwood, never won before, will be thrown—actually thrown—away, as if he were the younger son of a Nobody!" which horrible waste was so terrible to her imagination that Lady Marabout could positively have shed tears at the bare prospect, and might have shed them, too, if the Hon. Val, the butler, two footmen, and a page had not inconveniently happened to be in the room at the time, so that she was driven to restrain her feelings and drink some Amontillado instead. Lady Marabout is not the first person by a good many who has had to smile over sherry with a breaking heart. Ah! Lips have quivered as they laughed over Chambertin, and trembled as they touched the bowl of a champagne-glass. Wine has assisted at many a joyful festa enough, but some that has been drunk in gayety has caught gleams, in the eyes of the drinkers, of salt water brighter than its brightest sparkles; water that no other eyes can see. Because we may drink Badminton laughingly when the gaze of Society the Non-Sympathetic is on us, do you think we must never have tasted any more bitter dregs?

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"She does like him!" sighed Lady Marabout over that Sabbath's luncheon wines. "It's always my fate—always; and Goodwood, never won before, will be thrown—actually thrown—away, as if he were the younger son of a Nobody!" which horrible waste was so terrible to her imagination that Lady Marabout could positively have shed tears at the bare prospect, and might have shed them, too, if the Hon. Val, the butler, two footmen, and a page had not inconveniently happened to be in the room at the time, so that she was driven to restrain her feelings and drink some Amontillado instead. Lady Marabout is not the first person by a good many who has had to smile over sherry with a breaking heart. Ah! Lips have quivered as they laughed over Chambertin, and trembled as they touched the bowl of a champagne-glass. Wine has assisted at many a joyful festa enough, but some that has been drunk in gayety has caught gleams, in the eyes of the drinkers, of salt water brighter than its brightest sparkles; water that no other eyes can see. Because we may drink Badminton laughingly when the gaze of Society the Non-Sympathetic is on us, do you think we must never have tasted any more bitter dregs?

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And she furled her fan, and smiled on him with her pleasant eyes, and couldn't help wishing he hadn't been on the Marchioness Rondeletia's visiting list, he *was* such a detrimental, and he was ten times handsomer than Goodwood!

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"May I ask you a question, and will you pardon me for its plainness?" asked Cardonnel, when she'd exhausted Baden's desirable and non-desirable points.

Lady Marabout shuddered as she bent her head, and thought, "The creature is never going to confide in me! He will win me over if he do, he looks so like his mother! And what shall I say to Adeliza?"

"Is your niece engaged to Goodwood or not?"

If ever a little fib was tempting to any lady, from Eve downward, it was tempting to Lady Marabout now! A falsehood would settle everything, send Cardonnel off the field, and clear all possibility of losing the "best match of the season." Besides, if not engaged to Goodwood actually to-night, Val would be, if she liked, to-morrow, or the next day, or before the week was over at the furthest—would it be such a falsehood after all? She colored, she fidgeted her fan, she longed for the little fib!—how terribly tempting it looked! But Lady Marabout is a bad hand at prevarication, and she hates a lie, and she answered bravely, with a regretful twinge, "Engaged? No; not—"

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Lady Marabout was silent; no Andalusian ever worried her fan more ceaselessly in coquetry than she did in perplexity. Her heart was appealed to, and when that was enlisted, Lady Marabout was lost!

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"Indeed!"

"Perhaps you can guess, my dear, what he said?"

"I am no clairvoyant, aunt;" and Miss Val yawned a little, and held out one of her long slender feet to admire it.

"Every woman, my love, becomes half a clairvoyant when she is in love," said Lady Marabout, a little bit impatiently; she hadn't been brought up on the best systems herself, and though she admired the refrigeration (on principle), it irritated her just a little now and then. "Did he—did he say anything to you to-night?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And what did you answer him, my love?"

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Lady Marabout sighed, coughed, played nervously with the tassels of her peignoir, crumpled Bijou's ears with a reckless disregard to that priceless pet's feelings, and wished herself at the bottom of the Serpentine. Cardonnel had trusted her, she couldn't desert him; poor dear Adeliza had trusted her, she couldn't betray her; what was right to one would be wrong to the other, and to reconcile her divided duties was a Danaid's labor. For months she had worried her life out lest her advice should be asked, and now the climax was come, and asked it was.

"What a horrible position!" thought Lady Marabout.

She waited and hesitated till the pendule had ticked off sixty seconds; then she summoned her courage and spoke:

"My dear, advice in such matters is often very harmful, and always very useless; plenty of people have asked my counsel, but I never knew any of them take it unless it chanced to chime in with their fancy. A woman's best adviser is her own heart, specially on such a subject as this. But before I give my opinion, may I ask if you have accepted him?"

Lady Marabout's heart throbbed quick and fast as she put the momentous question, with an agitation for which she would have blushed before her admirably nonchalante niece; but the tug of war was coming, and if Goodwood should be lost!

"You have accepted him?" she asked again.

"No! I—refused him."

The delicate rose went out of the Hon. Val's cheeks for once, and she breathed quickly and shortly.

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Was she sorry—was she glad? Lady Marabout hardly knew; like Wellington, she felt the next saddest thing after a defeat is a victory.

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The Hon. Val unclasped her necklet as if it were a chain, choking her, and her face grew white and set—the coldest will feel on occasion, and all have some tender place that can winch at the touch.

"Perhaps; but such folly is best put aside at once. Certainly I prefer him to others, but to accept him would have been madness, absurdity. I told him so!"

"You told him so! If you had the heart to do so, Valencia, he has not lost much in losing you!" burst in Lady Marabout, her indignation getting the better of her judgment, and her heart, as usual, giving the *coup de grace* to her reason. "I am shocked at you! Every tender-hearted woman feels regret for affection she is obliged to repulse, even when she does not return it; and you, who love this man——"

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"Yes," cried Lady Marabout, firmly, forgetting every vestige of "duty," and every possibility of dear Adeliza's vengeance, "if you love him, I would, decidedly. When I married my dear Philip's father, he was what Cardonnel is, a cavalry man, as far off his family title then as Cardonnel is off his now."

"The more reason I should not imitate your imprudence, my dear aunt; death might not carry off the intermediate heirs quite so courteously in this case! No, I refused Major Cardonnel, and I did rightly; I should have repented it by now had I accepted him. There is nothing more silly than to be led away by romance. You De Boncœurs are romantic, you know; we Valletorts are happily free from the weakness. I am very tired, aunt, so good night."

The Hon. Val went, the waxlight she carried shedding a paler shade on her handsome face, whiter and more set than usual, but held more proudly, as if it had already wore the Doncaster coronet; and Lady Marabout sighed as she rang for her maid.

"Of course she acted wisely, and I ought to be very pleased; but that poor, dear fellow!—his eyes are so like his mother's!"

"I congratulate you, mother, on a clear field. You've sent poor Arthur off very nicely," said Carruthers, the next morning, paying his general visit in her boudoir before the day began, which is much the same time in town as in Greenland, and commences, whatever almanacs may say, about two or half-past P.M. "Cardonnel left this morning for Heaven knows where, and is going to exchange, Shellelo tells me, into the —th, which is ordered to Bengal, so he won't trouble you much more. When shall I be allowed to congratulate my cousin as the future Countess of Doncaster?"

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"Every woman, my love, becomes half a clairvoyant when she is in love," said Lady Marabout, a little bit impatiently; she hadn't been brought up on the best systems herself, and though she admired the refrigeration (on principle), it irritated her just a little now and then. "Did he—did he say anything to you to-night?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And what did you answer him, my love?"

"What would you advise me?"

Lady Marabout sighed, coughed, played nervously with the tassels of her peignoir, crumpled Bijou's ears with a reckless disregard to that priceless pet's feelings, and wished herself at the bottom of the Serpentine. Cardonnel had trusted her, she couldn't desert him; poor dear Adeliza had trusted her, she couldn't betray her; what was right to one would be wrong to the other, and to reconcile her divided duties was a Danaid's labor. For months she had worried her life out lest her advice should be asked, and now the climax was come, and asked it was.

"What a horrible position!" thought Lady Marabout.

She waited and hesitated till the pendule had ticked off sixty seconds; then she summoned her courage and spoke:

"My dear, advice in such matters is often very harmful, and always very useless; plenty of people have asked my counsel, but I never knew any of them take it unless it chanced to chime in with their fancy. A woman's best adviser is her own heart, specially on such a subject as this. But before I give my opinion, may I ask if you have accepted him?"

Lady Marabout's heart throbbed quick and fast as she put the momentous question, with an agitation for which she would have blushed before her admirably nonchalante niece; but the tug of war was coming, and if Goodwood should be lost!

"You have accepted him?" she asked again.

"No! I—refused him."

The delicate rose went out of the Hon. Val's cheeks for once, and she breathed quickly and shortly.

Goodwood was not lost then!

Was she sorry—was she glad? Lady Marabout hardly knew; like Wellington, she felt the next saddest thing after a defeat is a victory.

"But you love him, Valencia?" she asked, half ashamed of suggesting such weakness, to this glorious beauty.

The Hon. Val unclasped her necklet as if it were a chain, choking her, and her face grew white and set—the coldest will feel on occasion, and all have some tender place that can winch at the touch.

"Perhaps; but such folly is best put aside at once. Certainly I prefer him to others, but to accept him would have been madness, absurdity. I told him so!"

"You told him so! If you had the heart to do so, Valencia, he has not lost much in losing you!" burst in Lady Marabout, her indignation getting the better of her judgment, and her heart, as usual, giving the *coup de grace* to her reason. "I am shocked at you! Every tender-hearted woman feels regret for affection she is obliged to repulse, even when she does not return it; and you, who love this man——"

"Would you have had me accept him, aunt?"

"Yes," cried Lady Marabout, firmly, forgetting every vestige of "duty," and every possibility of dear Adeliza's vengeance, "if you love him, I would, decidedly. When I married my dear Philip's father, he was what Cardonnel is, a cavalry man, as far off his family title then as Cardonnel is off his now."

"The more reason I should not imitate your imprudence, my dear aunt; death might not carry off the intermediate heirs quite so courteously in this case! No, I refused Major Cardonnel, and I did rightly; I should have repented it by now had I accepted him. There is nothing more silly than to be led away by romance. You De Boncœurs are romantic, you know; we Valletorts are happily free from the weakness. I am very tired, aunt, so good night."

The Hon. Val went, the waxlight she carried shedding a paler shade on her handsome face, whiter and more set than usual, but held more proudly, as if it had already wore the Doncaster coronet; and Lady Marabout sighed as she rang for her maid.

"Of course she acted wisely, and I ought to be very pleased; but that poor, dear fellow!—his eyes are so like his mother's!"

"I congratulate you, mother, on a clear field. You've sent poor Arthur off very nicely," said Carruthers, the next morning, paying his general visit in her boudoir before the day began, which is much the same time in town as in Greenland, and commences, whatever almanacs may say, about two or half-past P.M. "Cardonnel left this morning for Heaven knows where, and is going to exchange, Shellelo tells me, into the —th, which is ordered to Bengal, so he won't trouble you much more. When shall I be allowed to congratulate my cousin as the future Countess of Doncaster?"

"Please don't tease me, Philip. I've been vexed enough about your friend. When he came to me this morning, and asked me if there was no hope, and I was obliged to tell him there was none, I felt wretched," said Lady Marabout, as nearly pettishly as she ever said anything; "but I am really not responsible, not in the least. Besides, even you must admit that Goodwood is a much more desirable alliance, and if Valencia had accepted Cardonnel, pray what would all Belgravia have said? Why, that, disappointed of Goodwood, she took the other out of pure pique! We owe something to society, Philip, and something to ourselves."

Carruthers laughed.

"Ah, my dear mother, you women will never be worth all you ought to be till you leave off kowtowing to 'what will

plead for me?—if she ask for counsel, will you give such as your own heart dictates (I ask no other)—and, will you remember that on Valencia's answer will rest the fate of a man's lifetime?"

He rose and left her, but the sound of his voice rang in Lady Marabout's ears, and the tears welled into her eyes. "Dear, dear! how like he looked to his poor dead mother! But what a position to place me in! Am I never to have any peace?"

Not at this ball, at any rate. Of all the worried chaperones and distracted duennas who hid their anxieties under pleasant smiles or affable lethargy, none were a quarter so miserable as Helena, Lady Marabout. Her heart and her head were enlisted on opposite sides; her wishes pulled one way, her sympathies another; her sense of justice to Cardonnel urged her to one side, her sense of duty to "dearest Adeliza" urged her to the other; her pride longed for one alliance, her heart yearned for the other. Cardonnel had confided in her and appealed to her; *sequitur*, Lady Marabout's honor would not allow her to go against him; yet it was nothing short of grossest treachery to poor Adeliza, down there in Devon, expecting every day to congratulate her daughter on a prospective duchy won, to counsel Valencia to take one of these beggared Cardonnels, and, besides—to lose all her own laurels, to lose the capture of Goodwood!

No Guelphs and Ghibelins, no Royalists and Imperialists, ever fought so hard as Lady Marabout's divided duties.

"Valencia, Major Cardonnel spoke to me to-night," began that best-hearted and most badgered of ladies, as she sat before her dressing-room fire that night, alone with her niece.

Valencia smiled slightly, and a faint idea crossed Lady Marabout's mind that Valencia's smile was hardly a pleasant one, a trifle too much like the play of moonbeams on ice.

"He spoke to me about you."

"Indeed!"

"Perhaps you can guess, my dear, what he said?"

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"My dear mother, I'll do my best to be sympathetic, I'll go and congratulate Goodwood as he gets in his cab, if you fancy I ought; but, you see, if I were in Dahomey beholding the head of my best friend coming off, I couldn't quite get up the amount of sympathy in their pleasure at the refreshing sight the Dahomites might expect from me, and so—"

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Which piece of advice Carruthers, when he next saw his mother, repeated to her, for the edification of all future *debutantes*, adding a small sermon of his own:

"My dear mother, I ask you, is it to be expected that we can marry just to oblige women and please the newspapers? Would you have me marched off to Hanover Square because it would be a kindness to take one of Lady Elmers' marriageable daughters, or because a leading journal fills up an empty column with farcical lamentation on our dislike to the bondage? Of course you wouldn't; yet, for no better reasons, you'd have chained poor Goodwood if you could have caught him. Whether a man likes to marry or not is certainly his own private business, though just now it's made a popular public discussion. Do you wonder that we shirk the institution? If we have not fortune, marriage cramps our energies, our resources, our ambitions, loads us with petty cares, and trebles our anxieties. To one who rises with such a burden on his shoulders, how many sink down in obscurity, who, but for the leaden weight of pecuniary difficulties with which marriage has laden their feet, might have climbed the highest round in the social ladder? On the other side, if we have fortune, if we have the unhappy happiness to be eligible, is it wonderful that we are not flattered by the worship of young ladies who love us for what we shall give them, that we don't feel exactly honored by being courted for what we are worth, and that we're not over-willing to give up our liberty to oblige those who look on us only as good speculations? What think you, eh?"

"My dear Philip, you are right. I see it—I don't dispute it; but when a thing becomes personal, you know philosopher becomes difficult. I have such letters from poor dear Adeliza—such letters! Of course she thinks it is all my fault, and I believe she will break entirely with me. It is so very shocking. You see all Belgravia coupled their names, and the very day that he went off to Cowes in that heartless, abominable manner, if an announcement of the alliance as arranged did not positively appear in the *Court Circular*. It did indeed! I am sure Anne Hutton was at the bottom of it; it would be just like her. Perhaps poor Valencia cannot be pitied after her treatment of Cardonnel, but it is very hard on me."

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Which piece of advice Carruthers, when he next saw his mother, repeated to her, for the edification of all future *debutantes*, adding a small sermon of his own:

"My dear mother, I ask you, is it to be expected that we can marry just to oblige women and please the newspapers? Would you have me marched off to Hanover Square because it would be a kindness to take one of Lady Elmers' marriageable daughters, or because a leading journal fills up an empty column with farcical lamentation on our dislike to the bondage? Of course you wouldn't; yet, for no better reasons, you'd have chained poor Goodwood if you could have caught him. Whether a man likes to marry or not is certainly his own private business, though just now it's made a popular public discussion. Do you wonder that we shirk the institution? If we have not fortune, marriage cramps our energies, our resources, our ambitions, loads us with petty cares, and trebles our anxieties. To one who rises with such a burden on his shoulders, how many sink down in obscurity, who, but for the leaden weight of pecuniary difficulties with which marriage has laden their feet, might have climbed the highest round in the social ladder? On the other side, if we have fortune, if we have the unhappy happiness to be eligible, is it wonderful that we are not flattered by the worship of young ladies who love us for what we shall give them, that we don't feel exactly honored by being courted for what we are worth, and that we're not over-willing to give up our liberty to oblige those who look on us only as good speculations? What think you, eh?"

"My dear Philip, you are right. I see it—I don't dispute it; but when a thing becomes personal, you know philosopher becomes difficult. I have such letters from poor dear Adeliza—such letters! Of course she thinks it is all my fault, and I believe she will break entirely with me. It is so very shocking. You see all Belgravia coupled their names, and the very day that he went off to Cowes in that heartless, abominable manner, if an announcement of the alliance as arranged did not positively appear in the *Court Circular*. It did indeed! I am sure Anne Hutton was at the bottom of it; it would be just like her. Perhaps poor Valencia cannot be pitied after her treatment of Cardonnel, but it is very hard on me."

Lady Marabout is right; when a thing becomes personal philosophy becomes difficult. When your gun misses fire, and a fine cock bird whirrs up from the covert and takes wing unharmed, never to swell the number of your triumphs and the size of your game-bag, could you by any chance find it in your soul to sympathize with the bird's gratification at your mortification and its own good luck. I fancy not.

be said, and learn to defy that terrible oligarchy of the Qu'en dira-t-on?"

"He *must* speak definitely to-morrow," thought Lady Marabout. But the larvæ of to-morrow burst into the butterfly of to-day, and to-day passed into the chrysalis of yesterday, and Goodwood was always very nearly caught, and never quite.

"Come up-stairs, Philip; I want to show you a little Paul Potter I bought the other day," said Lady Marabout one morning, returning from a shopping expedition to Regent street, meeting her son at her own door just descending from his tilbury. "Lord Goodwood calling, did you say, Soames? Oh, very well."

And Lady Marabout floated up the staircase, but signed to her footman to open the door, not of the drawing-room, but of her own boudoir.

"The Potter is in my own room, Philip; you must come in here if you wish to see it," said that adroit lady, for the benefit of Soames. But when the door was shut, Lady Marabout lowered her voice confidentially: "The Potter isn't here, dear; I had it hung in the little cabinet through the drawing-rooms, but I don't wish to go up there for a few moments—you understand?"

Carruthers threw himself in a chair, and laughed till the dogs Bijou, Bonbon, and Pandore all barked in a furious concert.

"I understand! So Goody's positively coming to the point up there, is he?"

"No doubt he is," said Lady Marabout, reprovingly. "Why else should he come in when I was not at home? There is nothing extraordinary in it. The only thing I have wondered at is his having delayed so long."

"If a man had to hang himself, would you wonder he put off pulling the bolt?"

"I don't see any point in your jests at all!" returned Lady Marabout. "There is nothing ridiculous in winning such a girl as Valencia."

"No; but the question here is not of winning her, but of buying her. The price is a little high—a ducal coronet and splendid settlements, a wedding-ring and bondage for life; but he will buy her, nevertheless. Cardonnel couldn't pay the first half of the price, and so he was swept out of the auction-room. You are shocked, mother? Ah, truth is shocking sometimes, and always *maladroit*. one oughtn't to bring it into ladies' boudoirs."

"Hold your tongue, Philip! I will not have you so satirical. Where do you take it from? Not from me I am sure! Hark! there is Goodwood going! That is his step on the stairs, I think! Dear me, Philip, I wish you sympathized with me a little more, for I *do* feel happy, and I can't help it; dear Adeliza will be so gratified."

"My dear mother, I'll do my best to be sympathetic, I'll go and congratulate Goodwood as he gets in his cab, if you fancy I ought; but, you see, if I were in Dahomey beholding the head of my best friend coming off, I couldn't quite get up the amount of sympathy in their pleasure at the refreshing sight the Dahomites might expect from me, and so—"

But Lady Marabout missed the comparison of herself to a Dahomite, for she had opened the door and was crossing to the drawing rooms, her eyes bright, her step elastic, her heart exultant at the triumph of her maneuvers. The Hon. Val was playing with some ferns in an etagere at the bottom of the farthest room, and responded to the kiss her aunt bestowed on her about as much as if she had been one of the statuettes on the consoles.

"Well, love, what did he say?" asked Lady Marabout, breathlessly, with eager delight and confident anticipation.

Like drops of ice on warm rose-leaves fell each word of the intensely chill and slightly sulky response on Lady Marabout's heart.

"He said that he goes to Cowes to-morrow for the Royal Yacht Squadron dinner, and then on in the *Anadyomene* to the Spitzbergen coast for walruses. He left a P. P. C. card for you."

"Walruses!" shrieked Lady Marabout.

"Walruses," responded the Hon. Val.

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